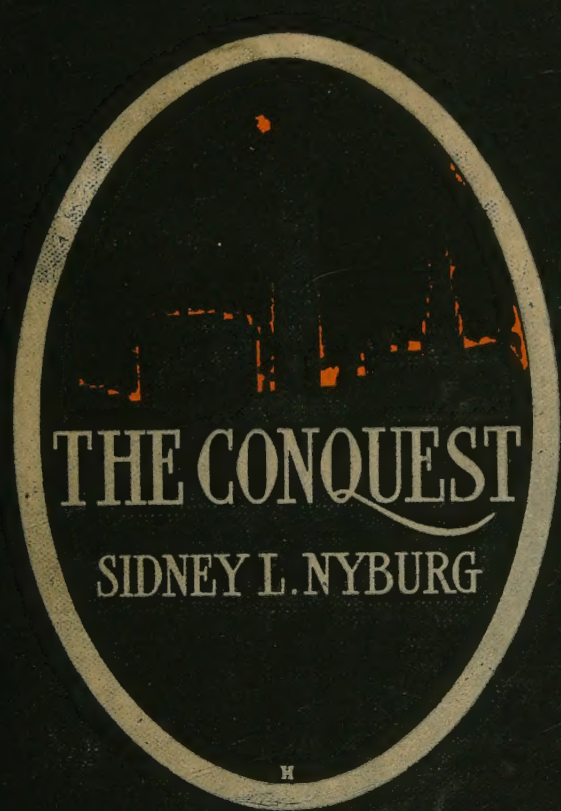




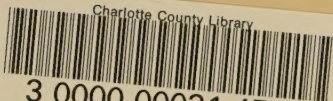
THE CONQUEST

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THE CONQUEST

BY
SIDNEY L. NYBURG

"All this!—All this—and—and—what for?"
"That's where the fun comes in."

—GALSWORTHY'S "STRIFE"



PHILADELPHIA AND LONDON
J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY

1916

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BOOK I
THE PLAN OF BATTLE, A.D. 1892

THE CONQUEST

I

“GENTLEMEN of the jury, you will now retire and consider what your verdict shall be.”

The clerk of the Court of Common Pleas repeated the time-honored formula in world-weary tones. He felt, apparently, a sense of personal injury, because the case had been given to the jury at this unseemly hour of the late afternoon. Even if an agreement were reached promptly, he would be late in getting home, and he showed his displeasure in each tone and accent.

The papers in the case were hastily thrust into the hands of the foreman, and with much shuffling of feet and stretching of arms and legs, the twelve good men and true filed out of the dingy court-room to complete their sworn duty, “a true verdict to find, according to the law and the evidence, upon the issues joined between the State of Maryland, to the use of Annie Flynn, plaintiff, and Thomas J. Martin, defendant.”

If the white-haired judge shared the clerk's impatience, he was certainly more adept in the concealment of his mood. He prided himself somewhat on being a philosopher. To listen daily to tedious details and to do his part in sifting out of much falsehood and irrele-

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vance some few grains of truth, was his daily duty. He felt a certain pride in doing this work unusually well, and in a detached and impersonal fashion, the result to be reached in this particular case rather interested him.

"Mr. Thomas," he whispered to the clerk, "I am going to my room to read and smoke a cigar. Call me if the jury should agree."

"Yes, Your Honor," the clerk answered. He had indulged a faint hope that the judge would order the verdict to be sealed, and the jury dismissed until next morning. Then everyone might have gone home; but the whims of judges, like those of the weather, were to be borne without audible protest.

If there was an air of patient sufferance or interested detachment among the court officers, it was easy to see that the parties to the suit, their friends and their counsel, were animated by no such calm sentiments. The very air was tense with excitement. Annie Flynn, the plaintiff, a raw-boned, florid woman, clad in widow's weeds, and seemingly most uncomfortable in such stiff and formal attire, had evidently been crying. Her unattractive features still worked convulsively, as she seemed to stifle threatened sobs, and her big, red hands twitched nervously now and then. The defendant, Martin, a slender, well-dressed man of less than thirty-five years, sat beside his wife, murmuring to her, now and then, words of encouragement. She was still

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young, and retained vivid traces of a beauty, now sadly faded. It was easy to read in her face and figure that this trial had been only the last of a long series of strains, which had tried her soul. Even James Nelson, the veteran lawyer of the city, who had appeared for the defendant, seemed a bit shaken. It was a doubtful case, surely. He had spent three grilling days in its trial, and who could tell what a jury would do? He certainly had never expected that Howard boy,—a fledgling, just out of law school,—to put up such a fight.

“The Howard boy”—who was really about twenty-four years old—was leaning back in his chair at the trial table, in an attitude of complete exhaustion. It was difficult to be sure whether he was really calm, or merely controlling an intense nervous excitement with that deadly horror of betraying emotion, common to all young men. When his client spoke to him, he answered her in curt, impatient monosyllables. He was tired physically as well as mentally. He had been talking in low, intense tones to that jury for over an hour. One might have thought his speech no more labored than casual conversation, had he not shown in each line of his strong young body his utter weariness.

The old lawyer, in the course of his wanderings up and down the room, paused beside the chair of “the Howard boy” and slapped him cordially on the shoulder.

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"Well, Howard," he announced in an oracular tone, "I should say they'll be out about an hour." The young man nodded. He seemed to have talked himself out in the conduct of the trial.

The older man had talked louder and longer than his young colleague, and not once, but many times, had torn a passion into tatters, but he was neither tired nor inclined towards silence. "You made a great fight, Howard," he conceded cheerfully. "I don't know where you learned all your trial generalship. This is your first case, isn't it?"

The young man nodded again and Nelson talked on, without any need for encouragement.

"None of us can afford to underrate you after this. That is where I made my mistake. I thought Judge Carey would take this case from the jury on the first day; and he would have, too, if you hadn't sprung that Massachusetts decision on him. And that evidence of the architect! I don't see now how you ever got it into the record. In a few years, you are going to be one of the most dangerous men at the Bar."

John Howard was not impervious to flattery. Not many men of twenty-four are, and Nelson, though old-fashioned, was certainly one of the best lawyers in the city. In spite of his inward conviction that the old man was merely trying to minister to his vanity, the youth thawed perceptibly.

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"You can afford to be generous, sir," he answered, smiling as he spoke. "I had a strong case. If we'd changed clients, you'd have seen how poor a contest I should have made."

"Nonsense," Nelson retorted emphatically, "your case was so weak, I never took it seriously. A plumber comes into a furniture warehouse to fix a broken water pipe. An hour later, he is found dead at the foot of an elevator shaft. Where is your evidence of negligence? None. Where is your connection between the condition of our premises and your man's accident? Not a vestige. But you piece together a bit here and a chance word there and, by and by, you have dragged an inference into the case, like a magician pulls a live rabbit from his silk hat; and you cite authorities for it, too! If your client gets a verdict, it will be your fault—pure and simple."

The Howard boy continued to display an unaffected pleasure in his opponent's genial compliments. Nor was Nelson slow to notice the impression he had made.

"To be sure," he went on suavely, "nobody can tell what a jury will do. I can't, after all these years, and you surely can't; but an old lawyer like myself, or like the judge, for that matter, can recognize good work when he sees it. You've a great future before you, boy! Of course," Nelson continued, "even if you should get a good-sized verdict, old man Carey may pare it down, and whether the Court of Appeals will sustain his rul-

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ings on the evidence, only the Lord knows, but these things don't take away any of the credit of what you've done. Now," he interjected suddenly—as though the idea had just occurred to him, instead of having been carefully introduced by his long prelude—"what would you say to side-stepping all the uncertainty of this jury's verdict, and the motion for a new trial and the appeal? If you're in a reasonable mood, maybe we can get together. How would fifteen hundred in cash appeal to you?"

The young man instantly lost his expression of relaxation, and intense watchful rigidity appeared once more in his face, his figure and his voice. He was no longer the flattered boy. He was the cold, almost cynical, man of business.

"I'd say it was impossible, Mr. Nelson," he rapped out decisively, "we'll win or lose a clean-cut fight. The Court of Appeals can't reverse this verdict. Such a sum as you offer, when a man has been killed, is too much or it's too little."

"Ah, but your client may not think as you do," Nelson suggested, skilfully raising his voice until Annie Flynn could not fail to hear him. "She may think an old man's guess is better than a young one's assurance. Fifteen hundred dollars!"—(he drew the words out slowly and lovingly; in his round tones, they really seemed to indicate almost twice as large a sum) "fifteen hundred dollars may not seem so paltry to her."

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Nor did it. Annie Flynn, since her husband's death, had counted it a lucky week when she made six dollars, and she approached the trial table with fascinated eyes.

John Howard sat erect in his chair and faced both Nelson and his half-rebellious client with the look of a man who knows exactly what he wants and who intends to get it.

"My client," he announced, in the low vibrant voice he had used to the jury, "has placed this matter in my hands, and whether she wants it or not, I shall not allow her to throw away her chance of a decent verdict. I won't have it. Eight thousand dollars is the least sum we'll take,—not one penny less!"

"But, Mr. Howard,"—the woman began timidly.

"Sit down, Mrs. Flynn," Howard ordered peremptorily. "Mr. Nelson wouldn't be offering you fifteen hundred if he didn't feel sure the jury in the next room was going to give you a great deal more. You let me manage this matter!"

The woman shrank back to her seat again, completely cowed, even if she was not thoroughly convinced, and Howard turned rather sharply to his older colleague.

"Mr. Nelson," he stated, "I hope you and I will try many cases against each other from time to time. Please, in the future, don't try to lead my clients to disregard my advice. You may recall something about such conduct in the Code of Legal Ethics." The older

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man grew red with mortification. What he had done could have been excused only in the event of success, and certainly he had not succeeded.

"I was really trying to do you a good turn," he muttered.

"I don't want any good turns. I mean to do things my own way. If Mrs. Flynn had insisted on taking you seriously," Howard went on quietly, "I should have walked straight into the judge's study and have told him exactly what had happened."

Nelson looked at him for a minute with a puzzled expression. By all his reckonings, Howard should have been in a blaze of anger; but he seemed totally free from passion. He might have been talking about someone else's problem. The older man realized, in a half baffled way, that this young Howard was a bit odd. It would be difficult to manage him.

"Well," he finally conceded, "perhaps I did do what I should not have done. I'm sorry."

The Howard boy took the proffered hand and smiled genially.

"I don't really blame you," he said, "for trying to pull your client out of his dilemma. I suppose it's part of the game, and, after all, this case is only an incident for you. But for me, it's my great chance, and I don't intend that anyone—not you, nor Mrs. Flynn, nor the judge himself—shall snatch it from me."

II

THE short winter afternoon drew toward an end. There came a minute—most illogically and suddenly—when it seemed to be generally recognized that the jury had been deliberating a long time. Nelson took Mr. Martin by the arm and suggested a walk up and down the court-house pavement.

“A bit of fresh air and a whiff of tobacco won’t hurt either of us,” he announced.

The defendant seemed unwilling to abandon his tired young wife to keep her lonely vigil, but she urged him to go, with a tremulous smile. It was clear that the trial had played sad havoc with the nerves of both Mr. and Mrs. Martin.

Mrs. Flynn sat dejectedly in her chair. It was not her habit to permit herself to hope for anything good. It was her wont to prepare herself studiously for the worst, and she had rarely been disappointed. In this spirit she had married, and her lord and master had treated her with no greater tenderness than she had expected. In this spirit, too, she had predicted disaster to the bold Flynn through all the four years of their married bliss. She had only been amazed because the catastrophe had been delayed so long in its coming. After his death, she knew she would have a hard time

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making enough to live on and to feed the two children, and when the idea of a law suit was suggested to her, she knew it wouldn't amount to anything. Now, her worst surmises were about to be realized. If this young sprig of a lawyer had been less impudent to Mr. Nelson, whom everybody knew to be a fine lawyer, and old enough to be this one's father into the bargain, they might have given her something. Now, even that hope was shattered. Poor folk got poor people to serve them, and that was the truth. If she had been rich, she'd have had a lawyer to make a great, fine speech, to be cried over properly,—not mere sober talk, such as this lad used. Still, she would stay to the end, as long as she was here.

Many of the other men and women in the courtroom proved to be less curious. It was verging perilously near to supper time—not the late dinner hour of to-day, but the hour of the evening meal of those days in the early "Nineties," when unfashionable folk, and not a few fashionable ones, dined lavishly at noon, and supped less sumptuously at six. One by one, the spectators acknowledged the prior claim of appetite over that of mere intellectual curiosity. The room, densely crowded at the end of the trial, became almost empty now. Here and there a newspaper man remained, annoyed, but philosophically realizing only too well his inability to escape from his post until the

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accursed jury agreed, or recognized its inability ever to agree.

Soon the bailiff moved from side to side of the room painfully and laboriously lighting each gas jet. For in the year of grace 1892, the conservative administration of justice would have looked askance at anything so radical as the electric light. The dusk was drowned in a pale yellow glimmer, not brilliant enough to make the place seem cheerful, and yet not dim enough to lend a charm to the surrounding gloom. The lighting of the gas jets promptly blotted out whatever of dignity might have existed in the bare room. Not that there was much. The old court-house seemed to be awaiting in patient despair the certain coming of an era of splendid and spacious quarters, with a glamour of polished marble and many hued mural paintings. The time seemed so near at hand, though not yet come, that it was hardly worth while buying a pretty gown for this withered old crone of a building.

The lighting of the lamps seemed to arouse John Howard from his reverie. Ever since he had repulsed the insidious attack of Mr. Nelson and stifled Annie Flynn's feeble effort to have some voice in the decision of her own destiny, he had been sitting—silent and motionless—at the trial table. He might have read law, for the table was strewn with books. He might have chatted with the bailiff or the clerk, both of whom made unsuccessful overtures in his direction, but he did

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neither. It was almost impossible to tell from watching him just what he was feeling, if anything at all. He was trying hard to seem absolutely unmoved, and he was succeeding fairly well. Perhaps he was playing the part of the inscrutable man of iron so perfectly that a seasoned observer would have found no difficulty in discovering his apparent calm to be flimsy sham; but then, there was no seasoned observer watching him. There were a few newspaper reporters, but for them the bare facts of the case constituted all the story they proposed to print, or to think about. If any one of them chanced to waste a surmise upon John Howard, he vaguely catalogued him as a young prig and proceeded to mourn once more for the delayed supper.

When the lights were lit, Howard arose from his chair and strolled absently toward the court-room door. He would have wandered out into the dark corridor had not his attention been arrested by the crash of glass just beside him.

Mrs. Martin, the defendant's wife, had suddenly felt faint and ill after her long day of nervous strain and suspense. In the hope that water would revive her, she had crossed to the opposite side of the room to fill her glass. As she had raised it to her lips, it had slipped from her unsteady fingers to the floor and in her startled weakness she, too, might have fallen, had not John Howard hurried to her assistance.

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“ Won’t you accept a bit of help from the enemy? ” he asked, smiling boyishly, as he steadied her with his arm and led her back to her place. He took his own glass from the trial table, and filling it with water, quickly brought it to her. He fanned her for a minute or two with an old newspaper, hastily snatched from a nearby bench. He did these things so unobtrusively that Mrs. Martin’s fears of “ making a scene ” were quieted. She began to take command of herself again. Her spasm of weakness was over.

“ You are very kind,” she murmured, a little faintly. It seemed to surprise her slightly to find him so gentle,—he who had, only a few hours before, spoken of her husband’s criminal negligence in quiet but intense words, which still left scars.

He was young enough to be somewhat hurt at her astonishment in finding him, after all, to be a gentleman. He was also young enough to allow his discomfiture to find expression.

“ You mustn’t think,” he protested, “ that I do not sympathize with you in this trouble. I can see how splendidly you’ve stood by your husband. Often, during the trial, I have wished the accident had happened in someone else’s factory.”

“ Why not wish it had never happened at all,” she asked, with a feeble smile, “ but I suppose if no one ever got hurt, or had misfortunes, your occupation would be gone.”

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He did not smile at her trite pleasantry. He seemed eager to champion the dignity of the profession of which he was still so young a practitioner.

"If no one were ever injured, or ill, the physician, too, would go hungry, yet you think his the noblest of labors."

There was an enthusiasm in his restrained but forceful manner which, in spite of herself, appealed to her. He was, she decided, notwithstanding his cause, "rather a nice boy."

"I wouldn't think well of my doctor, either," she answered, "just after he had probed a wound of mine, without giving me an anæsthetic; and you have hurt me horribly."

His face indicated genuine concern. "I know," he admitted frankly, "and I am sorry. I had to do it. I was hoping all morning you weren't coming back to court this afternoon to hear my closing argument; but I knew all the time you wouldn't shirk. If you're brave enough to have gone through all this, you must be big enough to see our side of the matter. What else could I have said, in justice to Mrs. Flynn? Don't you see it isn't fair to force her to go through life caring for her babies, without the money her husband would have earned for her? It isn't fair to the babies, either. Can't you see the justice of her claim?"

"I don't know just what to think," she replied gravely and thoughtfully, "I was never in a court-room

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before in my life. I was taught that courts were established to do justice between man and man. I expected to hear you and Mr. Nelson argue whether it was really my husband's fault which caused this man's death, and if it was, how much his life was really worth to his wife. But the trial has all seemed to me like an ugly game of mingled chance and skill. Mr. Nelson spent his time trying to outwit you, and in your quiet way, you tried to do the same to him. The grave, dignified old judge was merely an umpire, to make sure you played according to the rules. For three hours you argued as to whether the mere fact of this poor woman's husband being found dead at the bottom of the elevator shaft was evidence of his having blundered there in the dark, or whether all other possible explanations were excluded. Everyone in the court-room knew it must have happened as you contended, yet you and he played with the idea and tossed it from one to the other, and twisted it and dissected it. It was all I could do not to jump up and tell the judge and jury we were willing to admit what you contended for. And in the end, it was decided as you wanted, because thirty years ago, in Massachusetts, some judge—maybe not as wise as this one—had said something which seemed to bear out your theory. There's something grotesque about it.

“Then I expected Mr. Nelson would prove that thousands of elevator shafts in the city were just as

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dark as ours. When I suggested this, he only smiled tolerantly, and told me, in a whisper, such testimony wouldn't be received at all. I don't know what to make of your system.

"You tried to prove this man to have been a thrifty, hard-working, affectionate husband and father, while Mr. Nelson did his best to make the jury believe he was a fiend incarnate, always drunk, always harsh to his wife and babies. Both of you knew he was, in all probability, neither one nor the other, but a simple, ordinary working man, without any education—sometimes kind and sometimes surly, according to the moods all men have. You tried to prejudice the jury against my husband, to get a big verdict, when you say you think well of me and, therefore, must know I wouldn't have married him if he'd been the kind of man you painted. Mr. Nelson talked evil of the dead, and of this pitiful, stupid widow, to keep the jury from giving her much. You're young. You haven't seen very much more of it than I. Tell me, doesn't it seem odd to you to decide the course of whole human lives,—my own, my husband's, yours and that woman's—in so heedless a manner?"

Her vehemence troubled him. There sprang to his lips the precepts his teachers had urged upon him only a few months before. Instinctively, he knew they would have no effect upon her attitude of passionate revolt, and yet he felt constrained to make the attempt.

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"Dear lady," he argued, "you must see the necessity for definite rules in the conduct of any inquiry. Were this not so, justice would be a matter of sheer caprice. Rules cannot be definite unless they are rigid, and sometimes a little too technical. As for the over-emphasis both Mr. Nelson and myself laid upon the strength of our own sides, and the weakness of the other, truth is best evolved in such a way. The experience of mankind has shown it. Human justice cannot be wrought except in terms of human weakness and error. The effort is not to do justice in every case,—for that is impossible,—but to work out a scheme that shall do justice to the greatest number."

"Ah, if it did!" she protested, "but does it, really? It seems to me you have lost sight of the end you seek in a mass of useless learning. Whether you win or we do, justice has not been done in this case. Whatever that jury decides, somebody's life has been spoilt."

His quick mind was prompt to realize the futility of trying to impose on her the lawyer's viewpoint. He hastened to turn their interchange of thought into another channel.

"Is this case really so vital to you?" he demanded. "If there is a big verdict against you, will your life really be spoilt?"

The expression of fear which had been lurking in her eyes now resumed full command of her features. "If that jury really gives the woman a large sum,"

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she replied, "we'll"—she broke off. "I don't know what will become of us," she went on, with an evident attempt to compose herself.

"You see things have been a struggle for us from the beginning. Tom was only a clerk when I married him. My people were afraid he wouldn't be able to take care of me, but I wasn't afraid. I knew I could do without things. From the first, we began to save everywhere we could, so that some day Tom could have a factory of his own. We sacrificed more things than I could tell you of. All the little pleasures, necessities even,—sometimes. It was my venture as much as his—this business. I paid my share to make it possible."

"I can well believe you did," the young lawyer interjected, with undisguised approval.

"It took us five years," she said slowly and solemnly. "Five years, thinking always of the time when Tom would be his own master, and have his own chance to do his work in his own way, and keep all of the profits he worked so hard to gain. I don't think I was ever so proud and happy in all my life as on the day he gave up his clerkship, and we began to fit up the new factory; but then we were only at the beginning of the task. The little we had saved, and what Tom had been able to borrow, was not nearly enough capital. We had been planning and scheming and working to make each dollar do the work of three. Things had been getting a little better every year, and we were so

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happy!—Tom and myself and our little boy. It was something we built our very selves into,—and just then, this accident came, and threatens to snatch it all away from us. It seems too cruel! It isn't that I don't realize how hard it was on Mrs. Flynn, nor that we wanted to wash our hands of her. I never saw her husband in all my life, nor did Tom ever see him until the day of the accident; and we didn't build the factory building, with its dark corners. But we both, Tom and I, wanted to help the poor woman as much as we could afford. Mr. Nelson wouldn't let us. He said it would be a confession of weakness—an admission of our liability. I have no doubt Mr. Nelson's advice was good. You would have used our action against us. You see how wantonly your law does its work of crushing out human sympathies. This woman can never know how truly we yearned to help her in her sorrow, and the only thing your system can suggest is to tear down all we've built with our very lives, and to make paupers of us and our poor little boy." She ended in a flood of vehement self-pity, which carried her out of her marked habit of cultured self-control.

Before he could reply, she had regained her poise, and even made a brave effort at a pitiful gaiety.

"I talk like a heroine of melodrama," she said. "I don't know why I should have told all this to you,—of all people."

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"If you weren't an unusual woman, you wouldn't talk to me at all," he told her gravely.

"Well," she responded, "you asked questions; I've answered them. If we lose this case, we're done for. All we've saved will be gone. We'll have just about enough to pay our debts. We're not young enough, nor brave enough, nor blind enough, to begin again. My husband won't even find it easy to discover another master to give him work. It's ruin."

All he could find to murmur was "I'm sorry—sorry it had to be you."

But after a pause, he determined to make another effort to impose his own point of view on this gallant enemy. He could not explain to himself why he was so anxious she should not think too ill of him. He simply accepted the fact, and began in his quiet, earnest manner: "Think for a minute of this Irish widow's position. She hasn't your education, your culture, or your magnificent courage; 'stupid' you call her, and so she is; but she lived her own little round of contentment,—the wife of a strong, skilled mechanic, who earned a large wage for a man of his class, and treated her as well as she had been led to suppose any husband would. She was really a woman of position in her little circle,—a sordid group to people like you (yes, and to me, too. I'm not criticising you), but it was her circle, remember. Her husband earned twenty-two dollars a week. That was wealth for them. If he was a

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bit rough with her sometimes, she, herself, is not too delicate or exacting. In her way, I have no doubt, she was really fond of him,—not a whit less because, now and then, he struck her. Perhaps she was even a bit proud of his mastery. Suddenly, without warning, he is gone! Her whole life totters about her ears. She hasn't, as you have, any spiritual resources of her own to draw on; nothing is left, day after day, but scrubbing floors and feeding and beating the babies. That, and remembering her lost grandeur. Her only chance at anything like happiness is money,—your money. It's hard on you, but, at least, you lose only money. Your husband hasn't been taken from you."

"You're taking the best part of him," she retorted. "You make him for life the prisoner of poverty, sentenced to hard labor, with nothing but weariness and unhappiness to share with his wife and boy."

"The scrubwoman!" he insisted, "is her labor less wearing? What about her boys?"

"I wanted to help her," Mrs. Martin repeated. "It was your courts which stood between us."

"You wanted to give her charity, but she has the right to justice. Her strong, vigorous man is dead, because there was no light at your elevator shaft. Can't you see you owe her the money value of his life? Even if she gets a big verdict, her share, invested safely, cannot yield more than about six hundred a

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year, much less than the man earned. Somebody must pay, and unfortunately, it's you."

She turned to him suddenly and asked sharply: "Were you ever poor?"

"I am poor now," he answered simply. He might have added that he had worked his own way through college and law school; that all his savings, and some borrowed money, besides, had gone to fit up an office; that he had staked everything on this venture at being a lawyer, and if this very case failed to bring him prestige, additional work and the promise of some money, he could not see how he would get through the winter. He did not say these things. He had a gift of timely reticence. She suspected that he might have expanded upon the theme of his poverty, and was pleased with him for the good breeding which kept him silent. At the same time, his conduct seemed to reproach her subtly for her own unwonted garrulity. Still, her suppressed excitement drove her on to further speech.

"Well, if you're poor," she insisted, "you know perfectly well poverty isn't the same thing to you and to Mrs. Flynn. It means to her nothing but what she is accustomed to know. It's ugly, but not terrifying; for you, it means no books, no pictures, no music, no opportunity for meeting interesting men and women—none of the pleasant things which make life beautiful and make you grow. It means these things to us; it

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means more; it means that we can't give such opportunities to our little son; it means, besides, haunting, numbing fear as to what degradation to-morrow may bring."

"Just because she has already reached the depths from which you shrink makes her case more pitiful than ours can ever be," he urged. "But I can't make you see it. I realize it would be asking the impossible to expect it of you; but, at least," he concluded, with a smile which no woman could have failed to find winning, "you no longer think of me,—the woman's advocate,—as a dreadful monster, do you?"

Her expression, as she looked into his face, was very wistful and searching. His smile died away. "Tell me," she inquired impulsively, "if you'd had this talk with me last week, would you have tried this case in just the same way?"

A lie would have been so easy and so pleasant. It was characteristic of John Howard that it never occurred to him to make use of it.

"In just the same way," he answered soberly. "My duty was to this woman! No matter how much I admired you, no matter how well I knew I was hurting you, it would have been wrong for me to have left out one word of my argument which might have helped her to a large verdict. A lawyer may not indulge his sentiments or his friendships at his client's expense. His obligation is something like a soldier's,

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and when he is called to battle, he may be forced to wound his dearest friend."

She shrank from him as though he had struck her. Her voice was low and harsh as she said, "It isn't that I don't like you. I do. I think you're a nice boy and you've a wonderful brain. I know it, to my bitter cost. Maybe you'll laugh when I say I am sorry for you. I told you I had a little boy. God knows what will become of him after you've taken our money away. But I'd rather strangle him with my own hands than have him grow up to enter on your detestable trade."

III

JOHN HOWARD, who had returned to the trial table, sat motionless in his chair, making vigorous efforts to shake off the burden of depression Mrs. Martin's burst of passion had laid upon his spirits. After all, why should he care what she thought of him or of his work? The whole opinion of thinking mankind was against her. She spoke under stress of a bitter unhappiness. She was not, at the best, a woman of abnormal mentality or learning. He knew his work was not ignoble; at least, it was certainly no less honorable than any other form of work. Society had classed it among the learned and dignified professions. Yet, she had made him uncomfortable. She had clouded the pleasure of the victory he was confident of winning. It was as though the warrior, in the thick of combat, had been given a vision of the women and children made desolate by his skill and valor. It caused him keen distress, even though he couldn't see how he, or anyone else, was in any wise to blame. Men must fight in this world with swords and with money. There was no other way of life. As a result, some must be killed and more must be wounded. That meant the wailing of women and children. Was not that inevitable? Was it a fair indictment against the courageous soldier? Mrs. Martin had somehow put him

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in the wrong. Together with his sympathy for her, was an unreasoning resentment. With her womanish appeal to his pity, she had spoilt his great day—the day on which he had proved that, stripling though he was, he was not unworthy to take his place in the thick of legal warfare.

In the midst of his musings, there came an unwonted clatter in the room. The doors were flung open and the actors and spectators in this sordid little drama streamed back from the corridors, bringing with them again the atmosphere of suppressed excitement. In some occult manner, there had been noised about a rumor of the jury's agreement. Mrs. Flynn took her place once more beside Howard, in dumb expectancy, eager, but uncomprehending the possibilities of the rôle she was playing. Mrs. Martin and her husband sat together on the first of the long benches behind the trial table, her hand tightly clasped in his, as though each sought from the other strength to bear with courage an inevitable stroke of fate. Mr. Nelson, with a theatrical display of confidence, hurried to his seat at the trial table. An attendant clumsily lighted a gas jet above the judge's desk, hurling a law book to the floor in his haste. It made a prodigious sound in the silence and was followed by the nervous laughter of the spectators. An instant later, Judge Carey, with dignified dispatch, ascended the bench, and the jury filed into the court-room and was seated in its box. Every-

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one there mentally hazarded a guess as to the verdict, as he scrutinized the tired, sullen faces. Evidently, the discussions had not been conducted without some friction. They seemed hungry, vexed and disturbed. The clerk of the court whispered sagely to the bailiff his belief that had it not been supper time, a verdict would not have been reached so promptly; perhaps they never would have agreed.

The judge tapped his desk lightly with his gavel and the bailiff cried "Silence!" in utter disregard of the fact that he alone had broken a hush almost uncanny.

The matter-of-fact voice of the clerk was then heard, droning the formal and utterly unnecessary question:

"Gentlemen of the jury, have you agreed upon a verdict?"

"We have," came the low rumble from the jury box.

"Call the equitable plaintiff," ordered the judge.

"Annie Flynn!" called the clerk, as though anxious to get through with the ceremony and home to his family and food.

"Here!" replied John Howard, answering for her in his quiet, confident voice.

"Who shall speak your verdict for you?" demanded the clerk, of the jury.

"Our foreman," came their answer.

That important personage arose. The gas light fell

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full on his rugged features. He was obviously a man whose life had been spent in manual toil, and apparently was almost crushed by his new-found dignity.

"Gentlemen of the jury," the clerk hurried on, "how say you, do you find for the equitable plaintiff or the defendant?"

The foreman, with untutored dramatic instinct, gave himself the benefit of an instant's delay before replying. For one minute, he was a heroic character,—his hidden answer pregnant with destiny.

"For the equitable plaintiff," he announced most solemnly.

"And at what sum do you assess the damages?" the clerk demanded, almost savagely.

"At the sum of fourteen thousand dollars," the foreman said.

John Howard heard from behind him a quick, almost sobbing breath. He did not turn his head, nor did he smile at the magnitude of his victory. He knew the sound had come from Mrs. Martin, and that she was fighting hard and successfully to keep back her tears.

"Gentlemen of the jury," the clerk proceeded, "hearken unto your verdict as your foreman hath spoken it, and the court hath recorded it. Your foreman says you find for the equitable plaintiff in the sum of fourteen thousand dollars, and so say you all of you?"

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"We do." The jury's response straggled from its members, and they made preparations to leave their seats.

"Gentlemen of the jury," the clerk concluded, gathering his papers together as he spoke, "you are discharged from further duty until to-morrow morning at ten o'clock.

"At ten o'clock!" John heard Mrs. Martin's voice murmur brokenly. "To-morrow they will do things like this again."

IV

THAT same morning, John Howard had entered the dingy old court-house, haunted with its memories of brilliant lawyers and learned, just judges, now long since dead. Life had then seemed a more simple and direct matter than it did to-night, as he walked down the narrow street on his way home. He was oppressed by a puzzled feeling that all human values were somehow confused.

He had taken his place at the trial table on this last day, with a sense of exalted pride. In his own clerical fashion, he was a worthy descendant of the mediæval knights-errant. His great opportunity to appear in the lists had at last arrived, the day of battle for which he had so faithfully prepared,—for which he had so eagerly waited. He was to win a triumph against a foeman worthy of his steel and in his victory find fame, fortune and the right to claim as his very own the lady of his dreams. It was all so simple. But to-night, having borne down in combat his opponents, having fought his tourney valiantly and well, the sense of joy in his success was utterly lacking. The moans of the wounded victims of his skill had blunted the keen edge of his happiness. Fame! Well, there would be talk enough of his victory, certainly, but he felt, somehow, a bit uncertain whether it was

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renown or notoriety he had achieved. Money! Surely, when the case was settled, he would have more than he had ever possessed in all his young life, but the thought of Mrs. Martin's white face and pitiful words: "It's ruin," filled him with a quixotic desire to give to her the entire fee he had earned. He knew perfectly well he did not really intend doing anything so ridiculous, but the mere fact of this perverted desire was a source of misgiving.

Of course, there was Margaret Gilmor. He could marry her now. There would be money enough to last them until another case should be tried and won; but here, once more, he experienced a baffled sense of discomfort. He wondered what she would have thought could she have been in court and heard his discussion with Mrs. Martin. Was he a hero to her only because she did not thoroughly understand him and his work? Of course, he *was* a hero to her; no doubt on that subject had as yet assailed him. She was part of the spoils of his victory. Through all the weary months at the squalid little boarding house, just aside from the traffic of West Baltimore Street, where he had lived in the uncomfortable room under the roof, which was as hot in summer as it was cold in winter, he had thought, with a naive and boyish romanticism, about Margaret—his Margaret, he had called her in his thoughts, though never in actual words, for in the sedate year 1892 the proprieties were

spelled in larger type than to-day. But the unspoken language of youth, and the way of a man—and particularly a young man—with a maid, have changed very little in their essentials since the day of the sage King Solomon; and maids—particularly blithe and pretty ones—have their own inarticulate ways of making known to cavaliers, who are penniless and, therefore, silent, the cheering tidings that their addresses are not altogether unwelcome.

It never occurred to John to doubt that Margaret would blush charmingly and surrender with frank happiness when he told her he had gained the right to put into words what she must long since have known. To be sure, she was not of the languishing type, who sees a love-stricken swain in every man who comments pleasantly and conventionally upon the weather and the lack of proper ventilation in a boarding house. Far from it. She approached as nearly to what was then known, rather awesomely, as “the new woman,” as a pretty and altogether lovable girl of nineteen could. For she taught in a public school the wisdom she had learned in the same gaunt building, only a few years before; and she, like John Howard, had not a relative within miles of Baltimore and, therefore, lived alone in a boarding house,—which fact in itself would have constituted a public scandal, had the public not been utterly oblivious of her existence. Nor was that the worst of her independent foibles. Every pay day,

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she carefully carried to the old, brown-stone savings bank, on Eutaw Street, a substantial part of her earnings, with the fixed idea, when they had swelled to sufficiently dignified proportions, of abandoning her pupils and entering a Women's College.

There was even then under construction in the northern suburbs of the city such an institution, and men gravely and apprehensively debated whether the higher education was really an influence to which tender Southern women should be exposed; but Margaret had no qualms. The thought of blue stockings brought no terrors to her soul, though her own hosiery continued to be dainty and sombre hued.

After she had won her coveted Bachelor's Degree, there was to be still more teaching and then a four years' course in a medical school. To such depths of depravity had this young culprit sunk! The elderly spinsters at the boarding house opined sadly what a real pity it was that Miss Gilmor should be so "strong minded," as though there were some particular merit in being weak minded.

As a matter of fact, Margaret was the exact antithesis of being masculine, if that characteristic was what her critics meant by the phrase they applied to her. She was feminine to the tips of her attractive, tapered fingers, and if she meant to be a physician, it was not because she was clamorously seeking what it was then fashionable to call a "career," but because,

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being impelled by stern necessity to earn her bread, she had early decided to do work which should be interesting and well paid, rather than labor at something dreary and unremunerative. This was the sum and substance of her practicality. However, she lent herself somewhat to misconstruction, because she had not yet learned to look with much patience upon ineffectual failure, and still more because mere man, just because he was male, awakened no flutterings in her speech or conduct. The masculine wreckage which floated in and out of the little community at Mrs. Randall's select, but unpalatial, establishment on Hollins Street, seemed to make no more impression on what should have been her susceptible young female heart than if they had been feminine book agents. To all of them she had been courteous, distant, and if the truth must be admitted, more than a little disdainful. They were a sad lot—without ambition or initiative—she told herself.

But when John Howard entered her field of vision, she seemed to lose a part of her dominant singleness of purpose. The charms of independence, and of the ultimate practice of medicine, grew perceptibly less inviting in her eyes.

John had refused to be terrified by the forbidding reputation she had acquired among her fellow boarders. He had rather insisted on being taken into her confidence. They had, from the beginning, found a bond

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of communion in their reprehensible condescension toward their surroundings, human and inanimate. John had noticed, when he went through the ordeal of his first meal at Mrs. Randall's table, this one bit of feminine daintiness and charm among these tawdry neighbors. Amid men and women who talked too much, too intimately and too querulously, it was pleasant to find someone (like himself, he modestly admitted) who knew how to preserve a decent reticence, and who patently displayed a superiority to an unpleasant environment. If Margaret had been just enough years older to perceive the pathos in Mrs. Randall's oft-repeated assurances touching her patrician origin, or had John been sufficiently mellowed to hear with tolerance old Mr. Todd's plans for transforming his wonderful patent into a still more wonderful fortune, the boy and the girl might never have passed the borders of casual acquaintanceship. For among the flotsam and jetsam of a genteel shabby boarding house, there were several who had more interesting memories to conjure out of the past, and more marvellous (if less plausible) dreams about the future, than either this man or maid, each of whom was full, almost to overflowing, with youth's insolent contempt for all weakness except its own; but John Howard's every action proclaimed him the banished prince, living in dismal but romantic exile, only until a rapidly approaching restoration to his kingdom should be achieved; while the still younger Mar-

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garet could only give a grave and dignified sympathy, reaching down miles from her own lofty altitude to those lesser beings, who saw life through dimmer eyes than hers. And so almost by mathematical necessity, these two, marooned among what they chose to think negligible creatures, became friends. Margaret was distractingly pretty and that, in itself, might have been enough to ensnare (if not, perhaps, to hold) the thoughts of a young and susceptible boy, who, in spite of his brilliant, restless mind and his absorbing studies, was miserably hungry for simple, human companionship, since he was too poor either for innocent pleasures or harmful dissipations, and had few friends of his own age and tastes. But Margaret was much more than merely pretty. She had a mind—not a mind, to be sure, like that of John, who was always seeking a new and better way to do an old thing, or a reason for abandoning the old thing altogether—but a spirit quick to see intellectual merit, even though she could not originate it, and eager to adopt the best of other men's thoughts when presented to her. It was that quality which led her to admire John Howard and to let him see quite frankly how much she approved of him. No man of four-and-twenty (or alas! of four-and-sixty) ever received the undisguised and, of course, well-deserved, admiration of a pretty lass of nineteen entirely unmoved. John found himself helping her with her work, explaining in a few minutes, in his own

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luminous, simple language, problems she had puzzled over fruitlessly for hours. He made opportunities for long walks, announcing with almost haughty candor his inability to offer her more expensive forms of entertainment. On these walks, they talked long and solemnly about all those problems which, since time began, have vexed this gray old world, and been blithely solved each year by men of twenty or more, and girls of twenty or less. Most of all, they talked about themselves. It thrilled both of them that he, who was so strong and reticent, and she, who was so sweet and unspoiled, should find it possible to open their hearts—one to the other—and tell all those vague hopes and ideals, which from the heights (or are they depths?) of middle age seem so absurd and so beautiful. These talks were to Margaret an immensely broadening and disquieting experience. His faiths were not hers. His creed seemed to be made up of sheer force; his concepts were all created out of pure egotism. Yet he was full of charm in his quiet way and of such dominance at times as to make her a wee bit afraid of him. It amazed her to discover that it was at such times she liked him best. She began to entertain misgivings about the matter-of-fact, serviceable path of life she had marked out. She was not simple enough to have announced, even to herself, as some legendary women are supposed to do, a stern intention never, never to marry. On the contrary, she had always in-

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tended to marry if she chanced across the man who corresponded to the plans and specifications she had minutely prepared; and this mystical husband was, it must be conceded, something of a prig. She never doubted for an instant the willingness and ability of this not impossible lover to fit his life to hers, and, in a vague fashion, at once to do his work in the world, while he succeeded in increasing her own opportunities for individual growth. She did not intend, as she, herself, would have phrased it, to merge her identity in any man's! John Howard was not one whit like the diffident hero of her imaginings. She knew better than anything else about him one certainty: If she married him, he would dominate every action and thought of her life. There would be for her no college, no medical school, no study, no existence at all, except along his lines. She would spend her years ministering to his ever-expanding growth of mind and spirit. After a brief and violent struggle with herself, she, to her own intense astonishment, came above all things to desire this obliteration of her own plans. So much of her work and of herself would be wasted if she married John! She could not abandon them without regrets; but it amazed her to become conscious of another and a more potent phase of her nature, which would be totally wasted if she did not marry him. She recognized the poor logic of her emotions. Sometimes she smiled at herself a bit wist-

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fully, as she tried to analyze what was passing in her mind. But she ended by secretly confessing herself a willing captive to his spell. He was so strong!—even though his strength was as yet untried; he was so forceful!—even though one could only guess to what ends this force would be applied. He was so sure of himself and so certain he could bend others to his will!

The knowledge of a power in herself to awaken in him emotions and a disguised tenderness no one else could call forth, filled her with a strange sense of solemn joy, for which no price seemed too great to pay. It would be happiness merely to belong absolutely to a man like John; the more sacrifices of selfish ambition one could make for his sake, the more beautiful life would be—the less unworthy a woman would have proved herself to deserve the affection of so wondrous a creature.

And John? You must remember his own views on the subject of John Howard were almost identical with Margaret's. Her unspoken, but none the less evident, estimate did not seem to him unduly exaggerated. He was, in truth, a rather unusual young man, and he knew it perfectly well. His teachers had told him of the fact. His classmates at college and at the law school had freely conceded it. Not that these external tributes were necessary to his appraisal of his powers. He flattered himself he understood his own abilities and his own limitations a little better

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than any stranger could know them; and he was probably right.

As to his spiritual capacities and blemishes, he gave them little thought. His views on the philosophy of life were frankly materialistic. With all his egotism, there was, however, something fine and clean about him—a strong avoidance of degrading things, not so much in obedience to any code of morals, but because he felt himself instinctively to be too important and vital to soil himself with baseness.

Margaret's admiration of him, therefore, could not seem otherwise than eminently right and fit. However, while it awakened no surprise in his mind, it did stir that other side of him which you might have called his soul, if you had not minded his laughing at you. She was so frank, so free from coquetry, so willing to admit his superior claims to knowledge on all subjects, yet so tenderly anxious to be helpful to him! He could not remain unmoved by her sweetness and gentle strength. Besides, an external event hurried them along in its current. Mrs. Randall's other guests began, with imbecile smirks and ancient vacuous jests, to link their names together. Margaret, who suddenly had become less disdainful and more sensitive to the horror of being forced upon any unwilling man, showed symptoms of withdrawing herself from his daily notice. This roused the strong antagonism of John—never far beneath the surface. How absurd it would be for

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decent self-respecting people to allow a pleasant relationship to be shattered by the idle chatter of miserable idiots! The male element in him was awakened to pursue her. Margaret was not to be taken away from him in this purposeless manner. He redoubled his efforts to be with her often and discovered anew those thousand little methods, whereby boys have never failed to indicate to girls how potent is the appeal of their charms. Margaret welcomed these subtle evidences of his apparent affection with open pleasure. She was no more afraid than he of silly gossip. She had merely been overwhelmed by an instinctive feminine apprehension lest he feel himself entangled against his will. She was not the creature, she told herself proudly, to connive at a scheme for entrapping any man. But if he persisted—and he did persist!

At last there came a month of strain and stress, just before John's admission to the Bar,—when he found himself, as the result of a series of petty financial disasters, without any money at all. In the midst of his final law examinations, he was put to the most embarrassing and annoying expedients for securing the tiny sums necessary to meet his few personal expenses. He was even compelled to undergo the unspeakable humiliation of craving the temporary forbearance of the mistress of the boarding house, and he went through the ordeal with the stern formality and frigid ungraciousness of a martyr making his final remarks

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at the foot of the scaffold stair. It was Mrs. Randall who told her of John's dilemma, and delicately—so very delicately, that even he could not but recognize its quality—Margaret showed him her bank book, with its amazing total and urged him to treat her like a comrade. He would not take her money. He could manage somehow, he assured her; and the event proved he was right. But his refusal was a tender one, almost as gracefully framed as her generous offer, and burdened with unspoken meanings which she was almost afraid to translate into definite thought. She loved him none the less because he was unwilling to make his fight from behind a woman's skirts. It seemed to her the quintessence of chivalry which forbade him to accept any promise or pledge from her while his own horizon was black with danger. She would await joyously the outcome of a struggle, which could end only in his complete success.

From that night, although not one word about their marriage had ever been spoken, neither doubted what the outcome of their friendship was to be.

He had even indulged himself, on many nights before he lapsed into sleep, in pleasant imaginings as to how it would all come to pass. He would return from court on the day his first big victory had been won—full of enthusiasm and happiness in the thought of seating this fair and adoring girl beside him on his throne. It would be a glorious winter afternoon—

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sparkling, sunlit and cold. He would wander from the court-room up Charles Street, with the memories of his triumph still ringing in his ears, until he reached the shop of the most exclusive florist in the city; and he would buy roses—great, vivid pink roses—somehow like his Margaret. Then he would hurry home to the dingy old boarding house, and let himself into the hallway quietly, so that no one would intercept him and waste even one minute of his precious day of days. He would tap gently at her door on the second floor—just beneath his own—and would hear her clear, eager voice ask who was there. He would answer (full of suppressed excitement and exultation) “It’s I—John, come to the door. I want to talk to you—now, at once.” And she’d come—promptly. She always did what he bade her. As she stepped out into the narrow and dim upper hall, he’d have an all too fleeting glimpse of her prim little room, so dainty and tidy amid the squalid disorder to which Mrs. Randall’s other boarders had accustomed him. Then, when she should look at him—her pretty face all alight with happy anticipation—he’d announce: “I’ve won a case—a great big case. Lots of people will want me to work for them now. There’ll be money, too—money galore, and nothing more to worry about. We’re going to celebrate!”

She would know what climax the celebration was to have, but with a delicious shyness she would give no outward hint of her knowledge. Then he would give

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further orders. "Get into your most festive clothes. Look! I've brought you a few flowers! We'll walk—it's too fine a day to be cooped up in a pokey old horse-car—we'll walk down to the Carrollton and have supper—a real supper, not one of Mrs. Randall's. After that, if there's time, maybe we'll go to the theatre. We're going to pack a whole year's fun into one night."

She would hesitate for a minute or two—suggest timidly, perhaps, the imprudence of his extravagant plans—but he'd brush her objections away with his characteristic lordly air as he would go on to tell of the golden shower sure to descend almost at once. Then he would rush upstairs to dress, leaving her a bit bewildered, with the great box of roses in her arms, only to descend half an hour later, to find her patiently waiting to be borne off in triumph. They would walk briskly through the gathering dusk to the stately old hotel, talking blithely as they went about his great victory and his brilliant prospects. She would be no less happy than himself, for was she not to share in his good fortune? It would be a merry little supper party, made up of joyous words and laughter, with a serious undertone of great responsibilities soon to be assumed. There would be glowing candles and flowers, and the soft harmony of distant music, as they feasted luxuriously upon all the dainties which had been denied them through these weary months. He could picture

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with absolute accuracy each detail to himself. It would be for her a foretaste of the care-free and bounteous life he meant to create for this dear girl, who had been so fortunate as to find favor in his eyes. There should be nothing she could faintly desire which he would not lay at her dainty feet—nothing, at least, which occurred to him; what share she might demand in the molding of their joint lives never, even remotely, entered his mind. She was completely his, and she was good and beautiful, just as the roses he meant her to wear. His imaginings concerning her did not extend to speculation regarding her inner self, and what he called love was, therefore, largely part and parcel of his own tremendous egotism; but to him it was a fair vision, and he sought to pierce no further into its meaning.

On this night, when his dreams should come true, they would idle long at supper and have much to say, each to the other. Perhaps they would be too late for theatre. He would not really be sorry. He would have her all to himself so many hours more. They would return to the boarding house, no longer repulsive, because it was now to be their shelter only a short space longer, and also because it was to be linked for all time in their thoughts with such ardent memories. The long, bare parlor would be entirely deserted and with a delightful sense of proprietorship, he would take her wrap from her shoulders and lead

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her to a chair, placed next to his own before the glowing little stove. An open hearth would, in truth, have fitted the exigencies of the occasion better, but the rosy fire-light, even if it were thrown from a tawdry, blackened little stove, would bring into relief those clean cut features which were now to be softened with a tender affection for him.

Then he would tell her how much she had meant to him during those care-filled days of preparation; how the thought of her had filled him with courage and resolution; how hard he had found it to keep silence until he had earned the right to demand her and how unutterably dear she was to him. He did not doubt his ability to phrase these not too original thoughts rather well. In a quiet, severe fashion, he had a genuine feeling for appropriate words, and he knew his powers with accuracy.

She would listen, of course, in agitated joy, to the story no girl ever finds dull, and she would lay her hands in his in sweet and happy surrender; and while she was in the midst of her solemn and beautiful confession, he would take her slender young body into his arms and rain kisses on her arch and mobile lips—those lips which had tempted him so often. For, with all his power and reserve, the thought of those gracefully moulded lips, long desired and soon to be generously yielded to his importunity, had been to him a source of bewildered craving. He could think of no reason

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why any woman's caresses should appeal to him—to John Howard, who saw the verities of life and its absurdities with clearer eye than is given to the common herd. It was her alert mind, her sweet humility, her thoughtful imagination, which had won his affection, he, time and time again, assured himself. But, illogical as it seemed to him, he desired also the warm human symbols of endearment. He meant to claim both flesh and spirit at her hands.

So ran his dreams, and he had found in them many hours of solitary happiness, but they had been rudely brushed aside during the week of preparation for the all-absorbing trial of Flynn *versus* Martin. It was as though there had been a corroding poison lurking in that case. The hours sacred to Margaret had, perforce, been given over to study and planning for the battle. He had, from the first, mapped out a campaign of vigorous and unsparing denunciation of the defendant, which should be all the more effective because it was to be done without heat or passion, but coldly, quietly, relentlessly. He had spent night after night drilling the sodden Mrs. Flynn for her ordeal on the witness stand. There had been something unutterably grim about the whole atmosphere of this effort, by means of law, to avenge the sudden death of one man, by clutching at the fortune of another. When, after nights given to such labor, John endeavored to com-

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pose himself for sleep, the idea of conjuring up rosy visions of happiness with Margaret seemed incongruous to the point of absolute impossibility. Thoughts of love and marriage seemed to find no place in the same brain which only an hour before had been creating nicely-laid schemes for entrapping Mr. Martin into damaging admissions. His was no task for a dreamer.

What amazed John most of all, however, was the facility with which he managed to pass these seven days without seeing his Margaret or thinking much about her. Engrossed as he was with the details of this important case, he was consciously surprised at finding how full and interesting his days and nights were, although he could find no time for speech with Margaret, or even for more than the most fugitive thoughts of her. He knew she was thinking long and earnestly about him and wishing vainly she could have borne some share in his labors. He, for his part, would have found—could he have spurred himself to the emotion—a definite pleasure in mourning their enforced separation; but he was too busy, and in his restrained fashion, too excited to miss her at all. When the case and the days of absence should have terminated in victory, he told himself, he would return again to his dreams and to the sweet reality of his Margaret. All should be as he had so fondly imagined it.

V

TO-NIGHT his hour had come, but it not only found him curiously warped from his former channels of thought and feeling,—subtly transformed from his romanticism of a week before,—but each circumstance he had so definitely anticipated had been stripped of its glamour. The day was not sunny and full of the color and exhilaration of winter. The hour was not that of early afternoon. It was now a dismal night, chill, penetrating, with a slow, cold drizzle of icy rain. The streets were filled with sleet and a walk to the Carrollton would have been a source of discomfort, rather than of keen pleasure. It was too late for supper anyhow. The evening meal at Mrs. Randall's was even now over. His verdict had arrived at the wrong hour, and on the wrong day. All the florists' shops had long since been closed. Every accessory for his celebration was lacking. Even the element of surprise, which was to play a part in his plans, had been snatched from him. The trial had been in progress three days. The newspapers had given it some measure of publicity. Margaret must have known nearly all afternoon that the jury was deliberating, and his fate being decided. She would be glad, of course, to learn his tidings, but certainly they would not come with the bewildering amazement he had foreseen.

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He could have forgiven Fate these harsh discourtesies, had she seen fit not to tamper with the workings of his own thoughts. A night of festivity—even a betrothal night—may be postponed and no great harm come of it. But there was a perverse force at work in the young man, which he could neither understand nor contemplate without irritation and disgust. He was not in the habit of finding himself a perplexing problem. To-night, however, he was miserable, when he should have been effervescently happy; despondent, when he should have been enthusiastic; a prey to doubt, when he knew he ought to be enraptured with the ardor of successful love. Perhaps, he concluded, it was the reaction from his physical and mental strain, and he resolved, in spite of his weariness and the cold rain, to walk home, making peace, if he could, with his rebellious mind as he trudged along.

A cable car thundered along Fayette Street as he braced himself against the keen wind—its lights blurred in its rapid rush up the quiet street. Its speed in that era of horse-cars was still sufficiently novel to arrest John's momentary attention. Rapid transit—such was his first fleeting thought—would cause accidents enough, with consequent litigation, of which he could have his share; his next reflection was that he must not allow himself to become too much engrossed in damage cases. Such work, if carried to excess,

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might make it more difficult for him to find clients whose matters involved great financial problems. These were what he wanted above all other things, and what he resolutely meant to obtain. That way lay the path to power. He meant to be a power in this city. He meant to have a voice in the control of its commerce and its finance. It hardly knew, as yet, of his existence, but some day he meant to be its master. He had made a beginning and the process had been painful. He thought once more of Mrs. Martin and tried in vain to forget her. Well, if he couldn't blot her out of his memory, he'd reason the thing out. She said he had shattered her life and the lives of her husband and boy, besides. He probably had. Another lawyer would have lost the case. He was sorry, bitterly sorry, he had caused her such pain, but as he strolled along the wet streets, it seemed perfectly logical that he must keep on doing just such things. "To-morrow," she had gasped, "to-morrow at ten they will do such things again."

However hysterically it was phrased, she had chanced on the truth, when one came to analyze it. He must crush people in his progress toward power, or abandon the quest altogether. He meant, in his own way, to play the part of Destiny in this inert community, as yet unconscious of the advent of its future monarch. In this task he must, of necessity, put down the mighty men of finance from their seats and exalt,

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as his lieutenants, those of low degree. Many who must be hurled from their comfortable places would be men of pleasant, cultured lives—men with charming wives and daughters; but these effete magnates, grown ineffectual, must give place to conquering youth. All of them, and their delicate women, would suffer as Mrs. Martin had done—perhaps much more. It was agonizing to think that he must inflict so much brutal agony, but it was certainly inevitable. Life was not such a flower-strewn path as he had imagined. Well, he wasn't going to permit the ache of it—his own or anyone else's—to swerve him from his purpose. He would steel himself to watch suffering without womanish tremors. The soldier succeeded in this, and the surgeon; so would he. Was a great city to suffer the inconvenience of horse-drawn street cars, because electric and cable cars were sure to kill and mangle careless pedestrians? It was morbid nonsense. The road to power lay open before him. He would not turn back. His purpose grew more stern and fixed, as he sat, snatching a hasty meal, in the little basement room on Fremont Street, where one then ate oysters, with a marvellous tang, such as gray-bearded men now tell their smilingly tolerant children can no longer be drawn from degenerate waters.

A few minutes later, he made his way into the boarding house, wet and weary of body, but with a soul as desperate and inflexible as that of a warrior

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who knows he has dedicated his life to an unrelenting war of conquest.

"He looks more like he had lost his case than won it," was old Mr. Todd's whispered comment. For the news of the jury's verdict had preceded him, and his reception was, to his mind, grotesquely anti-climatic. With the omission of Margaret, who was nowhere to be seen, the entire boarding-house population surrounded him and insisted on shaking his hand and telling him how each of them had always foreseen, with certainty, his success. He exerted himself to be gracious to these poor, contemptible creatures, who persisted in irritating his overwrought nerves, and perhaps not one of them realized what an effort he was making. There was nothing occult in the manner whereby the news of the verdict had arrived. Mrs. Randall had sent the negro maid to the nearest drug store, to request the obliging clerk to telephone to the office of *The Sun*, and the maid had returned with the momentous tidings.

John's importance in his little world had immediately become vastly magnified. Mrs. Randall had even ordered the servant to put aside and keep warm his supper, until he should come home, and this honor is the exact equivalent in boarding-house circles of the Victoria Cross in British military life.

John, however, declined the mark of signal respect he had won. He would not partake of the warmed-

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over supper, though he found grace to appear properly grateful. What he wanted, above all things, was to be alone—away from the chatter of shallow-brained derelicts, who failed to realize the repulsive aspects of victories—human oxen who could have no idea of the ruthless career of giving and receiving wounds to which he now felt he had finally committed himself.

As he climbed wearily up the creaky stairway, Margaret's door was opened and she intercepted him. He didn't catch the glimpse into her room of which he had so often thought. As a matter of fact, he had forgotten all about it. She had been waiting for him, and her welcome—however dissimilar to his imaginings—lacked nothing of affectionate warmth.

"Weren't you going to give me a chance to tell you I, too, am glad?" she demanded, with a reproachful smile.

"It wasn't my fault you had locked yourself in your room," was the unfortunate rejoinder which almost, but not quite, sprang to his lips.

He must be shaken, indeed, he told himself, when he felt an impulse to be cross with Margaret, and he vigorously took control of himself.

"I meant to talk to you later," he answered, "when all these babblers were out of the way; but I know you're glad, and it's good to have you tell me."

His words sounded to him stupidly conventional, so he clasped her hand to give them emphasis. She

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did not seem to notice the absence of spontaneity in his response. Her eyes shone happily, as she drew her hand away.

"So your great day has come!" she went on, "just as you knew it would. I knew it, too. But you look so tired; I'm afraid you're not enjoying it one bit."

"I am tired," he conceded.

The absence of the flowers, the supper and the celebration did not seem to matter to her at all. Perhaps she had never thought of these trappings of victory. Her quiet, but unconcealed, joy seemed to sparkle in her eyes and smile. She seemed so glad because of this triumph, which had made him so wretched! If only she could see Mrs. Martin, he thought, perhaps she wouldn't be exultant. For an instant, he linked her in his thoughts with the silly chatterers in the parlor below, who could see only the externals of life; but he was quick to remember her gladness was because of him, and he was penitent for his unspoken injustice.

But Margaret, who hadn't talked with her young champion for a long week, and who, therefore, could not guess what subtle poison was working in his veins, was filled only with a charming solicitude for his weariness and dejection. Her orders were at the same time pleading and peremptory: He must go straight to his room and rest. Anyone could see how he had been

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over-taxing his strength. She was sorry. There were so many questions about the trial she had intended to ask him. He would never know how proud of him she was! but all this must wait until to-morrow.

She was indeed sorry; that was evident. She had indulged her own dreams of what this evening was to bring forth, and though roses and music and revelry had played no part in them, perhaps she was all the more loath to await, even until tomorrow, the happiness she had never doubted she would find to-night.

Still, her loss brought its own reward with it. Even if her plans were somehow set awry, there was an anticipatory thrill in mothering this strong man, who could master judges and juries, but needed her to tell him how much his worn body demanded rest.

He noted her disappointment, while her happiness in missing a pleasure for his sake eluded him. In truth, he would rather have wrestled with his own spirit in solitude, but it seemed to him that it would be boorish, besides involving a confession of effeminate physical weakness, to deny her this hour of companionship for which she had so winningly admitted her desire. Perhaps, too, she could charm away the brooding dejection which had taken complete possession of him.

"No," he told her, "I couldn't go to sleep anyhow. It's not my body that's tired. I'll get into some dry clothes and by that time the house will be fairly quiet.

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Mrs. Randall will be in the parlor, I am afraid, but you can meet me in the dining-room, and we'll talk awhile before bed-time. It's raining too hard for us to go out."

She made no effort to prevent his seeing how pleased she was at his decision. "I know you ought not," she began dubiously, "but,"—and then compromising with her doubts, she said radiantly, "I'll brew you some tea," as though that would set everything to rights.

When John descended to the dining-room, he found Margaret had been awaiting him long enough to have made many little preparations for his comfort. She had stirred into ruddiness the languid fire in the stove, drawn in front of it the least uncomfortable chairs the room boasted, while on the table there simmered the miniature samovar she had brought from her own room. The gas lights had been almost extinguished and all that could be done to make cozy an ugly interior had been attempted.

Margaret motioned him to his seat beside the fire and daintily poured him a cup of the steaming tea.

"My lord is served," she announced gaily.

He thanked her soberly. "It's absurd of me to let you coddle me this way," he protested. "I'm not really more tired than I often am. It's just that I've been thinking queer thoughts, and they worry me."

"I have a cure for that," she assured him, her

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mothering instinct once more at work. "You have only to tell these thoughts to me."

"No," he retorted decisively, "they're contagious. I'd rather talk about something pleasant."

She felt somehow rebuffed and hurt by his unwillingness to trust her with his disquieting fears, whatever they might be, and for a short space silence fell between them. It was unfortunate that it chanced so. In the brief pause, John had time for a vivid memory of Mrs. Martin, perhaps at this instant trying vainly to comfort her stricken man, and of the long succession of other women, whose hearts he was to smite, through mates who might attempt to bar his path, without being his equals in strength.

If only the boy's sense of humor had grown apace with his intelligence and skill, how much of misery he might have been spared! Had he enjoyed the faintest glimmer of a feeling for the ridiculous, he might have laughed at the sheer absurdity of his obsession. He might have reflected that even Attila, the Hun, had found time and inclination for wassail, as well as carnage, and that the great Cæsar is known to history as a conqueror of tender hearts, as well as of mighty armies.

But if he could have smiled tolerantly at his own bitter seriousness, he would not have been John Howard, aged twenty-four.

It was Margaret who broke the silence. She

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would not let her petty little hurts, given by the thoughtless words of a troubled man, keep her from helping him to shake off his moodiness. She would talk, as he bade her, of something pleasant.

"Well," she began, naturally sounding the note which should have pleased and flattered him most, "let's talk about your case. I read every word the newspapers said, but I've been aching to have you tell me all about it."

She could have suggested no topic more irritating to his morbid mood. Still, he'd have to talk of it some time. It might as well be done now. He replaced the teacup on the table and reluctantly took up the theme.

"I don't know just what about this trial would interest you most," he suggested. "The only unusual things that happened are highly technical."

"Everything about it interests me," she assured him. "I want to know what you did, and what you said, and what everyone said about you. I should think you'd be bubbling over to tell about it."

It was easy to see that her interest was in the actor, rather than in the drama itself. He was vexed because, try as he would, he could not rouse himself to respond appropriately to her candid hero worship.

"Well," he explained, "the really difficult element in the case was this: Flynn, my client's husband, was found dead at the bottom of the defendant's elevator shaft. There were only the slightest bits of evidence

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to indicate how he got there. The great danger was in the court's holding there was no proof legally sufficient to show he fell down the shaft and did so as the result of a negligent condition of the premises. Had the judge so decided, he would have withdrawn the whole matter from the consideration of the jury, and our case would have been lost."

He was speaking the labored language of forensic argument, when he should have been telling her how Judge Carey and Mr. Nelson had applauded his skill. He knew he was doing it, but the technical problem he had solved was the only element involved, upon which he could now dwell without distaste.

She interrupted him, in evident perplexity: "I don't understand how there could have been much room for debate there. Everyone must have known the accident could not have happened in any other way."

Poor Margaret! She had blundered upon almost the identical phrase Mrs. Martin had used that afternoon in passing judgment upon Man's scheme of law.

Poor John, too! Her innocent remark almost took his breath away. She would think of him exactly what the other woman had thought if she ever learned what his tasks really meant. Women, in their judgments were, after all, curiously alike.

She would never understand the workings of his mind or of his ambitions. His life with her would be

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one long round of concealment or of defensive explanations—never carrying conviction.

Unwittingly she went on to demand an explanation of the situation she had failed to grasp. "Tell me," she said, "how could there have been much danger to you in so frivolous an objection?"

His feeling was that of definite antagonism. "Law," he said dryly, "is a technical science. One of its rules is that a plaintiff must prove every element of his case. He can't eke out his theory by any sentimental assumptions. The court would not presume, without proof, the manner and circumstance which caused Flynn's death." His manner chilled the girl. She saw she had somehow displeased him. She became vaguely conscious that her power over him had, to-night, lost its charm. She was troubled; but she spurred herself to another effort.

"I suppose I am not clever enough to understand all the subtleties," she admitted with a graceful humility, "but I see that you did make the judge take your point of view, difficult as it was to do! And then you made a splendid speech to the jury, didn't you? You must have, to have won so big a verdict. Mr. Todd said, at supper, it was the biggest verdict he could remember any Baltimore jury ever giving."

In spite of himself, John warmed a little at the glow of her enthusiasm and her gentle willingness to

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concede the superiority of his judgment in reference to the mazes of law.

"I didn't make what the casual observer would call a great speech," he informed her. "I worked half of last night to rule out of it the slightest trace of high-sounding phrases. You know I have always believed the style of speaking one hears in our courts is all wrong. Neither juries nor judges really like spread eagle oratory. Lawyers inflict it on them because they enjoy hearing themselves talk in such a fashion. I'm always going to talk to juries as though I were the thirteenth juror and wanted to reason the problems out with them. That's what I did to-day. I discussed the weak parts of our case with as much candor as the strong ones. At least, I made them think I did. When I played on their feelings, I didn't do it flagrantly. I did it all as one business man would talk to another. I never let myself shout at them as old Nelson did; and that's why I'm going to win cases other men, with as much brains as I, might lose."

It was this kind of conversation for which she had been eagerly, and rather anxiously, waiting. At last she had kindled a spark of enthusiasm in him, and with a pathetic elation in her momentary success, she strove to fan it into a blaze.

"It's all the more splendid," she asserted, "because the verdict proves your theory. It means more than merely winning this one case. You're sure to win

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cases, and difficult cases, too, if clients come to you; and they will come!"

"Oh, yes, I'll have no trouble getting clients—valuable clients," he admitted with complacency. "You see, I have my own system there, too. It's unethical for a lawyer to hunt up employers, and that is why, in his first years of practice, his work comes from people of no real consequence. I don't intend to let this happen to me. It's perfectly proper for a lawyer to organize new corporations and to solicit important men to become stockholders in them. That's what I'm going to do. I'll get to know the people who do this city's work, and they'll hold shares in the companies I manage. They'll learn to trust me and to send me plenty of business."

Confidingly, she beamed upon his boyish assurance. His egotism did not shock her. She ministered to it and encouraged it without one scruple. It was part of his splendid virility, she thought.

"You're so sure of yourself," she said. "I wish I were, but every time I'm tempted to be, I remember what happened to me last time I let myself get all puffed up with pride. Then I have to laugh at myself."

John could not remember ever having laughed at himself. He was no laughing matter. But it was a harmless, feminine occupation if the object of ridicule was carefully restricted to the lady who chose to be merry. He began to forget his temporary vexation.

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Margaret was not so unreasonable after all. Perhaps he would be able to make her accept his viewpoint.

But Margaret, not content with the pause which followed John's hymn to his own prowess, in her efforts to urge his thoughts still further along pleasant lines, struck the exact note she should have cautiously avoided.

"Of course," she announced unthinkingly, "Mrs. Flynn must be tremendously grateful. You've changed her whole life. She and her children will have a chance now; and this Mr. Martin will be properly punished for his carelessness. You can't give back to her the poor man who was killed, but in your way, you've been a sort of divinity to these people, rewarding the right and punishing the wrong. It ought to make you very happy and a bit solemn, too—doesn't it?"

Unconsciously, she had applied torture to his festering wound. She had shown her inability to see that good people had to be injured too, and that he had to do it—to make it his special work, in fact. She would want him to point his lance only at those she could convince herself deserved pain. She couldn't see anything bigger than mere questions of sympathy. Would she always be making his battles harder? He made an effort at setting her right.

"I am afraid, Margaret, your ideas are sentimental. One can't feel any bitterness against Mr. Martin. On

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the contrary! He didn't build his factory. He'd have had a better one if he could have afforded it, and I am sure he'll have a hard time now—he and his little family. I'm very sorry for him. It was just his misfortune that things happened as they did." He meant to elaborate his thought further, and to bring her, if he could, to learn what it meant to become the bride of one whose life was to be dedicated to the dealing of blows. But she broke into his explanations with her own solution.

"It's because you are, after all, so kind, that you feel for this man! It's like you, in spite of your efforts to hide it, to sympathize with anyone in trouble—even when he deserves it. Why are you always so ashamed to let people know how good you are?"

In one swift instant John's whole world reeled and went crashing into chaos. What was he to do with this pretty girl—saturated with ideas of trite conventional morality! He could never convert her to his own stern code. That he should adopt hers was unthinkable. There was not even any neutral ground of compromise. She would always be seeking to impose her own soft and impotent ideas of conduct upon him. She would be hurt when he resisted. She would use feminine arts to win him from his plans—would be a burden to him—a beautiful one, of course, but something to hamper and weaken him, ever striving to stay his arm when destiny bade him strike and strike hard.

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Margaret, however, assuming his silence arose from mere embarrassment at hearing himself praised, went on blindly, to enlarge upon this beloved theme.

She spoke with a happy shyness, as though his goodness in some sort reflected credit upon her, too, and there was, therefore, a trace of indelicacy in her boasting of it.

"I think," she murmured, "because in your austere way you are so good, that it's almost providential you're to be given so much power. I don't know—I suppose it's too early even for you to know just what you'll do with it—but I'm sure you'll put it to some big use. You'll do something to make the State or the city better and the people happier. You won't admit it. You'd say it was sentimental, but when the time comes, you'll do it, and you'll scowl at anyone who dares to praise you."

What malignant fate kept tempting her to emphasize how completely she misunderstood him? Would she never stop giving him thrust after thrust, under the guise of perfect love? Now she was planning to snatch from him the fruits of his victory, if by any impossible chance he should attain it in spite of her. She would not be content with standing between him and the enemy. Should he win his long campaign, she would always be striving to degrade it into the stuff of which moral tracts are made. His dominance must be put to the uses she approved; he must utilize it to

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serve the lesser men he had conquered. She would never learn that Power—Mastery—was an end in itself. She would never learn anything he considered really vital. It would be worse than madness for him to link his life with this soft, appealing bundle of attractive virtue and blindness. It wasn't merely because she would make him unhappy. The giving and suffering of unhappiness seemed to be his portion. But it would ruin his chance—his wonderful opportunity to mould his city's commercial life. No one must be allowed to do that, no matter what the cost.

But she would be so miserable if he forsook her. He knew it. He would have undergone anything to save her the pain he knew he was about to inflict—anything except the abandonment of the path he felt he could not travel with her by his side.

He, himself, had taught her to love him—this gentle creature, whose only flaw was her weakness. It was her very pliability and worship of him which convinced him of the impossibility of thrashing out the whole matter with her and giving her a chance to make her own choice as to her future. To-night, filled as she was with her unreasoning love for himself, she would accept any lot or any theory he might see fit to impose; but her own standards would sooner or later assert themselves. Her nature was molded altogether of sympathies and unreasoning compassions. How

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could these elements be blended with his own ruthless force?

He recognized a certain dishonor in what he was about to do, but he told himself he had never before realized his problem. He had supposed he might be allowed to enjoy the simple, domestic happiness granted to other and lesser men. His sudden knowledge had come too late to spare her—or to spare himself either. He would suffer no less than she;—he was suffering unspeakably now.

She was so pretty; so appealing. She never seemed more beautiful to him than at this moment, when he planned to hurt her so desperately. He wanted, above all things, to gather her in his embrace and comfort her in the woe she did not yet know was to fall upon her. He desired, with actual physical craving, to feel her lips against his own; but the price was too high! The cost was giving up everything of importance in his universe.

He groped about for the least painful way of dealing the wound. He would say good-night, and promptly. He couldn't talk to her again. Each time she looked at him, with her glance full of unspoken, but unhidden, affection, he would suffer the pangs a weaker man could not know. He would leave Mrs. Randall's house next day, while Margaret was away at school. He'd find quarters elsewhere. She would never demand any explanations. He had, after all,

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never spoken to her of love. She would have pride enough to be silent. He had no fears on that score.

What he planned seemed cowardly, of course, and above all things, John hated to think himself a coward. He felt keenly the need of some word of explanation with Margaret, so she might know he had not merely been playing at love, or was not tossing her aside because his affection had been a light or transient one. He resisted this impulse, because he decided, after all, silence would be less cruel to her. It was in this spirit that he rose painfully to say a good-night that should be for all time farewell.

"I'm more tired than I thought, Margaret," he said, trying to make his voice seem commonplace. "I am afraid I must ask you to send me to bed."

So her evening was to end, after all, without the longed-for word of love! She could not but think it would have been easy for him—no matter how worn his brain and his body—to have spoken one phrase translating into speech the beautiful legend she was sure gave purpose to his life, even as it did to her own. But men were less subtle in their cravings than women. She would be content. There would be to-morrow! She could not, however, banish her thought altogether from her speech.

"Good-night," she responded, as she gave her hand to his clasp. "There's so much more I had hoped you would tell me, but to-morrow, perhaps——"

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Her tones and her face were full of happy yearnings. She was so young, so transparent—and showed with such freedom from coquetry how much he meant to her. With her warm, eloquent hand in his own, he suddenly felt himself weakening—he, who could never afford to be weak!

Couldn't they be happy together, if only for a little while? Couldn't they live through a brief, wonderful idyl, even if disillusionment, misunderstanding and discord were sure to follow when his career should begin in earnest? Wouldn't it be better to give her one supreme springtime of joy, though he, himself, would be facing the secret certainty of the inevitable parting of their ways, just one stage of the journey ahead!

His revulsion came quickly and with unbounded force. No! He couldn't! Why put off for a few months a misery better faced to-night? Why wait until they were further committed to each other—their lives hopelessly tangled in a web of circumstance? She certainly would never love him less after marriage, no matter how his will and her hopes should clash. She was not a woman who would stop loving. The deserted wife would be even more wretched than the forsaken maiden. It was immeasurable folly upon whose brink he had stood. He would put himself at once beyond the possibility of its repetition.

"I'm afraid it can't be to-morrow," he announced

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sternly. He could feel his heart thumping madly, and he felt sick with the horror of what he was doing, but he never faltered.

“ You see, I think my first step should be to take up quarters in a part of the city where I shall meet the people I want to interest in my schemes. It will be hard—not being able to see you every day. I’ll miss you.”

He had done it! How he had found strength to go through with his work he, himself, did not know. As for Margaret, she looked for one instant as though she could not comprehend. Perhaps his words meant something less sinister than the interpretation her dizzy mind told her she ought to give them. With hurt and wistful eyes, she searched his face, but its grim, set lines tore from her the last shred of hope. There was, in that first moment, more of amazement than of anguish in her thoughts. What had she done—where had she offended, that she was, without warning, to be so mercilessly punished?

Then the full realization of her woe broke upon her, and she struggled desperately to preserve a tearless dignity. He was going away; he was never coming back. He didn’t want her any longer. He had been planning to get rid of her. He was doing it all of his own will. The man she had loved so confidingly—so whole-heartedly—it was he, himself, who wished her to suffer—his Margaret, whose dearest hope had been

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to spend a lifetime shielding him from all harm.

All the many women of the past, whose lovers have ridden carelessly off to the wars, without one word to solace the maids they had lightly taught to love them, stood by Margaret's side in that minute of torture and sustained and strengthened her in her effort to be calm—to be true to the instinctive code of her sex; to make no weak appeal for mere pity; to give no sign of pleading that he would not cast aside the great dower of love she had been treasuring for him.

And at the end, she *was* calm—almost heroic. Pale and proud, she could stand rigidly and speak without a tremor. She could even force to her lips a smile, so gallant and full of pathos, that had she wished to revenge herself upon John with most usurious interest for the anguish he had laid upon her, the desire would have been all too well accomplished.

“ Good-night then, and good-bye,” she said in even, though slightly strained, tones, “ I'll miss you, too. We must, at least, think of each other.”

VI

HOURS later, in his dark room, John lay in bed, gazing blankly at the pale yellow patch of light thrown upon his wall by the street lamp just opposite his window. His eyes obstinately refused to remain closed; his tired body and racked mind rebelled at the suggestion of sleep. He had almost abandoned the hope of it. If he could only stop thinking, or failing that, if he could merely control the trend of his imaginings, he would be content; but as though his punishment were to be conducted according to some definite and altogether logical scheme, he was compelled to think only of Margaret, of the Margaret whom he had ruthlessly thrust away from him. How still it was in her room, just below him! How wonderful that she could bear her share of the pain so silently! He had heard her door close only a few minutes after he had reached his own room. He had heard the faint tinkle of her teacups as she had returned them to their shelf. Then he had waited, in mingled dread and certainty, for the moment when, relieved from the necessity of restraint, she should feel free to weep for the loss of the illusion he had been forced to shatter; for the intense happiness he had laid in her hands, only to snatch away. No such sound ascended to him, only a few soft foot-falls, and then silence—a long and fateful silence.

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Even now, he knew with absolute certainty sleep had not come to her aid. He dared not believe it. She was keeping vigil, like himself. With all her weak and maudlin ideals, it seemed then that she, too, had her own strength. She would suffer in silence, rather than let him have tangible evidence of her wound. How pitiful it was and what a useless strain she was imposing upon her poor self! As if she might not have known how well he could anticipate her every thought, her every pang. If she could only hate him with a fierce, burning hatred! If her love could only turn to loathing! Then she would have been thankful as she realized how narrowly she had escaped giving all her young loveliness into the care of a monster. Why hadn't he had sense enough to make himself repellent to her? Why hadn't he disgusted her utterly? Then she might have turned from him, not he from her, and she would not be enduring this bitter humiliation.

He had been blind—he who was so clever! If he could only live this one night over again, how much he might have spared her!

Not that he had been wrong in his decision against their marriage. He had gone over and over again in his mind all the arguments. He could not discover any flaw in his conclusion. Such a marriage would bring exactly the disaster he had foreseen, and ought to have foreseen long before. He pleaded with himself to say he had been wrong, for he still wanted her,

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no whit less passionately than before,—all the more because she was suffering the torments he had inflicted,—all the more because of the gallant courage with which she had borne them. And she would still forgive him. Only a tender word of explanation, a protest that he had acted from a desire to save her from sharing what seemed to him a desolate life, a hint of his night of remorse and despair, and she would be his once more—irrevocably his.

To the cry of his spirit, however, his mind returned a vigorous denial. With merciless logic, his trained intellect led him in imagination from milestone to milestone of his future life, showing him just where and how and why this girl would make impossible his darling projects, and bade him choose now and forever between Power and dull domestic contentment.

At last, he felt he must, at all cost, exert himself to cease thinking about this disaster. He was making himself ill. What good could that do either of them? He tried to repeat rules of law, to think out problems in mathematics; he tested the virtues of the hundred devices he had heard of for inducing sleep. Always, do what he might, his fancy would return to the thought of the beautiful, sorrow-stricken girl in the room below him. He remembered having heard somewhere that if one could steadfastly keep his eyelids open, refusing to relax them even for an instant, slumber would surprise one. He would try it. He stared

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fixedly at the patch of light on the wall. Soon, Margaret's face appeared there—Margaret as she had seemed when he first saw her on this accursed evening, glowing with the joy of his success. As he looked, her face changed, and now she wore the expression of surprised anguish which had followed his brutal words of farewell; and now she was smiling the brave, piteous smile of the condemned. An instant later, the bloom began to fade from her face. The lines of youth began to sag and droop. Wrinkles appeared here and there. The eyes grew dimmer, and she became transformed into Mrs. Martin, staring reproachfully at him, as she announced she would rather strangle her little boy than have him enter upon John's "detestable trade."

He could not stand it a second longer. He sprang from the bed and hurriedly lit his lamp. The genial glow restored him somewhat to calmness and sanity. It was penetratingly cold in the room. The icy rain beat dismally on the tin roof just above his head. He hurriedly closed the window, tore the blanket from the bed and wrapped it about his shoulders. Then he seated himself mournfully at his study desk. Perhaps he would feel better if he wrote Margaret a note—not a hysterical letter, but a word of real kindness, which might remove at least one element of her humiliation. At any rate, it would be better to attempt this than to lie there, a prey to uncontrolled, hideous

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fancies, until morning should come. He drew a sheet of paper from his desk and very slowly and deliberately wrote:

DEAR MARGARET:

I know you must be miserably unhappy. I am no less so. All night long I have been struggling with my own feelings and picturing to myself how grotesque it seems that I should have injured you, whom I wanted, above all things, to protect. It wasn't because I made you love me without giving love in return. I still love you—I dare not tell you how much—now that I have lost you;—but to-night, I became certain I could never make you happy. I can't explain why, but I know our marriage would mean misery to us both. The reason of this is not your fault; on the contrary, it's partly because you're too good, and I'm not good enough—at least, not as you would understand goodness. This is not my fault either. I cannot change myself. I ought to have seen this sooner. I wish poignantly I could have borne it alone.

Forgive me, if you can, and forget me, if you find it possible. But if you can't forget me, remember that not one bit of the fault is yours; that I always loved you and always shall, and that I'm going to spend a lifetime being sorry for the misfortune I have brought upon you.

He was about to sign it "Your own, John," but he paused. He was not hers any longer. He had decided, and wisely, that he ought never to be hers. "John," without any softening phrase, sounded cold in a note, written, above all things, to bring comfort. He left the letter unsigned, and read it over again critically.

"It won't do," he muttered gloomily, "it sounds as though there's some mystery. She'd want to unravel it. She'd insist if I still love her, she'd take her chances

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with me. How can I tell her she'd be in my way? If I send that note, she'll come back to me! And if I send any note at all, unless it's curt and harsh, it will keep her all the longer from ceasing to care for me. I ought not to seem kind. I ought to seem a devil incarnate! I believe perhaps I am."

With sharp decision, he tore the note into little shreds, and rose wearily from his desk. He was surprised to notice that his mirror reflected the face and figure of the morning before. He had been sure this night had added years to his age. He would never be "the Howard boy" again. The morning would find that boy, with all his youthfulness, with all his sensitive charm, had died.

With the quality of this new-found and premature middle-age, there came a new resolution and an assurance that the worst of his unhappiness had gone—together with his lost boyishness. With stern determination, he extinguished the light, and re-opening the window, stood there an instant in the darkness of the early winter morning.

Away off in the distance, the low whistle of a train wailed. The first faint hum of re-awakened city life was borne along the rain-swept streets; the soft melody of bells from the great market place near the city's heart announced that the world of men was once more about to enter on its eternal task of sale and barter—of conquest and defeat—of hope and despair.

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It called to John. It was his—waiting for him to enter and take possession. His city! This capricious vixen, with her old world beauty, whom he meant to scourge into meek submission, even while, in his haughty way, he gave her all his love.

He strode to the bed with a new-found courage, recovered from among the ashes of his more human love. As he crept beneath the coverlet, there came to his ears another and more startling sound. Was it one of the noises of the city, or was it—as he feared—a stifled, but racking, sob? For an instant, he strained his ears to make sure, but it did not come again. With a vehemence, almost angry, he wrapped the blanket about his head, so that he could neither see nor hear.

Then, as though he could command nature herself if he would but remember his strength and his purpose, he awaited quietly, and with stern confidence, the coming of sleep.

BOOK II
THE HEAT OF BATTLE, A. D. 1898

I

A BRILLIANT, sunlit morning in early springtime, found John Howard briskly walking toward his offices on East Lexington Street—an older John Howard than the boy who had triumphantly brought to a conclusion the case of Flynn against Martin, and thereby discovered some odd phases in his own character. Six years of vigorous working and planning had rushed past since that day, but Time had taken from him, as yet, little visible toll. The man of thirty was as slender, and perhaps even more attractive in appearance, than the boy of twenty-four had been. If a patch of white hair showed at each temple, it simply added a touch of the unusual to the ruddy complexion and firm lines of countenance of early maturity.

The streets, that morning, were full of life and movement. Only a short distance from the office door, with all the noise and bustle typical of American construction methods, work was progressing upon the pretentious new court-house, now nearing completion. The outworn, old structure where John had first learned what it really meant to try a case, had been swept away in the march of progress, and it seemed much of its stately tradition had been brushed aside in its destruction; but the new era, like the new building,

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was to be spacious and magnificent, and John, for one, indulged in no mawkish regrets.

This morning, however, the ordinary street noises and the clank of the metal workers were mingled with a strange note—a note so unusual that even the busy young lawyer paused, with half quizzical interest, to give it attention. The sharp tap of drum beats and the tramping of many feet were heard coming down Charles Street. Suddenly, there sounded the shrill prelude of a fife, and an instant later, the music of “Dixie” crashed upon the air, only to be blended with enthusiastic shouts from hundreds of throats. For it was war time, and Maryland’s sons were eagerly marching forth, as they lightly imagined, to crush the strength of Spain and transform our nation into a world power.

John Howard had no idea of going off to war. There were more exciting things to be done here at home; more important things, too. For his own attitude toward the crisis was somewhat contemptuous. The nation, he had concluded, was suffering from a mild attack of hysteria. It would do the country no harm to rid itself, by vigorous exercise, of its nervous excitement. Moreover, hysteria was sometimes a symptom foretelling strange changes in national growth and structure. For his part, he meant to be a vital influence in controlling these developments and in twisting them to his own uses.

He was thoughtful for a minute, as he watched the

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boyish faces file joyously past, each aglow with youth and enthusiasm, as though there were no such things in the world of war as pestilence, misery and death. Then he pushed through the throng and entered his offices. They were situated in a rejuvenated old dwelling house, now neatly re-painted and bearing on the outer doorway, among many other similar legends, the sign board:

HOWARD & CHASE ATTORNEYS AT LAW

His rooms were on the first floor of the building. In the happier days of the history of that house, before the Civil War had laid its blight upon the lavish hospitality of Southern slave-holding aristocracy, they had constituted the parlor and drawing-rooms of a home famous for the witty men and lovely women who, night after night, were gathered together by its courtly host and hostess. If any old mansion is haunted in the watches of the night by vengeful ghosts, banished during noisy daytime hours by the sacrilegious din of commerce, it should be these old office buildings, where busy and uncouth men snap out momentous decisions about mortgage debts and damage suits within the very walls which once heard only the sounds of brilliant revelry and whispered words of real or pretended love.

John's offices certainly gave no hint of their former high estate of cultured leisure. They were full of the

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clatter and rush of business. A girl was feverishly pounding away at a typewriter. At another desk a second typewriting machine stood idle. A boy, of perhaps eighteen, was busily sorting mail, only to be interrupted by the tinkle of the telephone, attached to the wall, where all telephones were rigidly fastened at that time.

John hurried into his own room, and had hardly seated himself at his desk when his partner, Arthur Chase, rushed in and dropped into a seat beside him.

Arthur was slightly John's junior in years, and many years younger in aggressiveness, force and business insight. He was a pleasant, comfortable, but rather purposeless, young man, just beginning to grow a trifle stouter than was really necessary and amusingly disconcerted because of it.

"Hello, John!" was his greeting, "Miss Frank hasn't come in yet."

"No, I guess not," John answered absently, beginning to open his morning's mail. "I told her she might come late this morning. I kept her here until half past eleven last night. I was dictating the new Trust Company's organization papers, and I don't mind telling you I've got them into just the right shape. We'll have some powers in our charter that will make the old companies gasp when they wake up to their possibilities, about five years from now."

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"Half past eleven!" Arthur exclaimed uncomfortably.

"Yes, half past eleven," John repeated. "While you were in bed rapidly sleeping away your beautiful young slimness, I was here, earning gold and glory for you—you lazy brute! Now get out of here and let me work."

He turned again to the pile of letters on his desk.

"Not yet," Chase announced triumphantly. "First, I am going to heap coals of fire on your prematurely gray head by telling you some good news—really good news! Besides, I'm not getting fat. I weighed only this morning. I haven't gained an ounce."

"Huh!" John snorted, incredulously, "if your news isn't more accurate than your scales, you may keep it to yourself."

"But it is," Arthur protested—correcting himself as he caught the import of John's grin—"I mean both are reliable. You've won the tax-easement case. We got a wire from Annapolis this morning."

"That is good news," John said, enthusiastically. "Won't old Cameron be pleased! I swore to him we'd win it, but he had his doubts. If the Court of Appeals had betrayed my guileless, trusting faith, I'd have been done for with the traction crowd for ten years. I'd have been driven to crime. I'd have put the whole court to a lingering death by slow oratory, and gone off to poor, suffering Cuba to drown my sorrows in blood."

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"The newspapers will take a jab at the court in another fashion," was Chase's comment. "The decision will add three cents to the general tax rate. The public will be charmed."

"That's the smallest of my woes," John proclaimed cheerfully. "If the public cares to win cases, it should employ the eminent firm of Howard & Chase. Even at that, I believe we'd find it more profitable to work for Cameron."

"There ought to be a fat fee in this case," Chase suggested, somewhat more soberly. "I hope you won't have any acute attack of modesty when you come to fix the figure. My wife's been begging me for months to buy that cottage at Mt. Washington, and this looks to me like a genuine smile of fortune."

John's face grew grave as he answered:

"I ought to have talked to you about that before. The fee is going to be the biggest one we ever collected, but I am afraid your cottage will have to wait."

Arthur Chase looked across John's desk in challenging expectancy, and John went on with his explanation.

"You see," he stated, with finality, "I promised Cameron if he'd subscribe for that block of stock in the new Trust Company, we'd apply our whole fee in the easement case to buying stock ourselves; and he said if we won the case, he'd do it."

There was silence. Chase seemed trying to say

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something that should be strong enough to be effective against his overbearing partner, and yet not too strong, —not as full of anger as his mood demanded. Meanwhile, John, detecting symptoms of rebellion, struck in with words intended to preserve peace.

“I can see you’re not happy about it, Arthur, and I’m as sorry as you are to disappoint your wife. But we had to do it. If you would take Helen into your confidence a little and make her understand the fight we’re making, and the stake we’re playing for, she’d be more glad to do her part than you seem to be. Or, if you won’t talk to her along these lines, let me.”

“I can’t talk to her along those lines,” Arthur said, in hot resentment, “because I don’t see your point of view myself. Every year we’ve made more money than we had any right to expect, and every year we’ve skimmed along, buying shares in corporations which are going to earn dividends some day, and land companies with land the street car lines will reach the year after next, and banks which expect us to apply all our dividends to buying more and still more stock. This year, it’s a new Trust Company! Meanwhile, we’ve lived like paupers. Every time my wife needs a new frock, or the baby wants a toy, we have to go on a desperate hunt for the money, as though we were street beggars. The books showed last year my share of the profits to be nine thousand dollars, but all I really got was

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twenty-nine hundred. Oh, I know you give me two dollars for every one you spend on yourself! But that makes it all the worse. The time has come when we have a right to get some of the worth of our money."

John listened patiently, but inflexibly. "You've got to talk sense, Arthur," he insisted. "Here, by the grace of the good Lord, we get old Cameron for a client. We only got him because everybody else in town with any standing had told him he had no chance to win his appeal. I worked like a slave over his case, and got him into a rare good humor. He's the most important man in the traction crowd, not only because he's so rich but because he's in a position to influence all the other groups which control money. Why, a man like Cameron on the Board of Directors of a Trust Company means success almost without effort! He isn't the sort of man who would let his stock get worthless. He'd make his friends subscribe and send it profitable business. Now, when I urge him to buy stock and he asks: 'How much are you going to put in?' what should I have answered? Could I have said 'Nothing, but we expect to be general counsel, anyhow.' Or, do you think it would have been good policy to say: 'We'd like to hold stock, but we're too poor'?"

"Then why don't we sell some of our other holdings?" Arthur demanded. "We can't afford to carry

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so much in mere prospects. I want some comfort now, while I'm young and can enjoy it."

John answered him as indulgently as though the younger man were his unruly pupil. "We can't let go of anything now, partly because none of our companies are old enough to have developed their possibilities, and therefore, no one would buy our interests; but still more, we have to continue to hold them, because every one of our investments ties some important man, like Cameron, to us. We're laying a solid foundation for a unique success and you grudge me the money for the concrete. You're not really pinched for money. You can afford to be a bit economical. It's only for a few years more. You can see I had to use the easement fee. I'm pretty sure to win that ejectment case of Thurston's, and you may have your share of what he pays in cash."

"That will be only about five hundred dollars," Chase retorted. "What makes me wild is your habit of settling all these things yourself. You don't even do me the honor to consult me. I have to be satisfied with your decisions. I suppose you'll answer you do all the work, too. At least, all but routine work; and so you do, but that doesn't make it any better for me. You never trust me to attempt anything of consequence. I'm a dependent here—a person of no importance—an office boy! My only title to self-respect is

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that the allowance you pay is mostly in promises, instead of cash."

If Chase had hoped to rouse his partner to an anger similar to his own, he was doomed to disappointment. John heard him out, with a quiet patience, almost contemptuous. When Chase had subsided, he said authoritatively:

"Now, look here, Arthur, you're too old to talk so childishly. You don't seem to have the faintest conception of what we're doing, and how we have to go about it. It's true we make plenty of money for men of our age; but what's become of the old lawyers, who made more money than we do, and followed your theories of spending it? They lived well, worked hard, gave place to younger men while they still needed money and wasted their last years picking up crumbs on the strength of their former reputation. That's not my ideal of old age, and, on the other hand, I wouldn't be content with making a lot of money and investing it in four per cent. bonds. I mean to be a much bigger factor in the financial district than Cameron himself. You knew all this from the beginning. You knew we couldn't do it in a year, nor in five years, and you've no moral right to whine because I'm doing just what I told you I should.

"As for the work, I let you do whatever I think you're able to do. You know you can't try cases, and you know you never could understand the first elements

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of finance. You admit these things yourself. You're going to get your full share of all the benefits of our struggle. The least you can do is not to hamper me."

"You're so obstinate, John," Arthur informed him, beginning to repent of his display of bad temper. "I realize I ought to let you do what you please about most things; but you will be ruled about nothing. I wanted to economize, here and there, on office expenses. That's your one extravagance. You wouldn't even hear of it, although I'm supposed to be the office manager, not you. You insisted on high-priced quarters; you must make an impression on your clients. You're not content with one stenographer; you must have two. Better men than we are still sending out letters written with a pen."

"There are no better men than we are," John replied, but he laughed as he said it. Six years had at least given him the outward semblance of humor.

"Now listen, Arthur," he continued, good-naturedly. "We've wasted enough time this morning. The whole issue is this: I'm thinking of the future. You won't. Colossal things are going to happen all over this country. Business and finance and law are going to change. They won't go on in the old way. Wait till this trumpery little war ends, and you'll begin to notice. I can see it coming already. Now, who's going to profit by these changes? Shall it be you and I, or somebody else? I've made up my mind. I shall have

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my share, whether you toss away your chance or not,—but I'd hate to see you miss your opportunity. You'll laugh at me, and I can see myself it sounds rather funny, but the truth is, your opportunity is John Howard. I've made a beginning. I'm already hand in glove with some men who count. That's not so easy for a man of only thirty. If I play my game carefully—and you can be sure I shall—I'll be able to use those who can help me and gradually to shove out of the way those who can't. In five years more—seven at the most—I'll be the ruling power in this city. We'll control the more important banks, the trust companies, the street railways, all the big enterprises. I'll sit at my desk and pull the string that will make things happen."

His eyes gleamed, but they woke no corresponding glow in Arthur Chase.

"Perhaps you will, John," he admitted, discontentedly, "but it will be you—not I. Why should I be willing to give up the best days of my youth, living on short rations, so that at thirty-seven your insatiable vanity may be satisfied?"

John answered with his first show of real irritation:

"Don't call it vanity! It's not vanity! And that's what I'm going to do whether it meets your approval or not. I'd be sorry to break with you, but you can't expect me to become a pokey old village lawyer. I

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won't do it. If you can't make up your mind to go my way, we'll have to part company."

"But you'd keep all our clients," Chase protested, "even those who were mine at the beginning. You know there isn't one of them who wouldn't rather have you now, and you've done the work all alone, so that I'd never learn how to do it, even if I got the chance."

"I can't help that," John retorted, brutally. "You couldn't have held any of our clients who were worth while, even if I'd never been born. Fancy yourself drawing this Trust Company charter. You'd have copied somebody else's old form. Cameron would never have consulted you a second time. You need me, or someone like me, to tell you what to do. Given proper directions, you're a valuable man, and I'd be the last person to agree with your silly talk about being my office boy. The time will come when we need a director in nearly every big corporation in town, and then you'll be still more useful to me; but now and always, you've got to play the game my way, and you might as well make your choice.

"You can't say either that I wasn't frank with you from the beginning. If you remember, what I said to you was: 'See here, Chase, I can try cases; you can't. I can draw unusual papers; you haven't the knack. You have family connections which could be made valuable, but you don't know how to go about it. I

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have no family at all. Let's join forces, and I'll show you how to grow rich.' ”

Chase nodded an unwilling acquiescence.

“ Well, then,” John continued, sternly, “ I've done my share. I've given the firm a reputation for winning most of the cases it tries, and refusing to try most of the cases it can't win. I've drawn charters and deeds of trust and bond issues, such as you don't find in form books. I've used your family connections to put us in touch with men you never would have met,—much less gained for clients,—if you hadn't had me for a partner. And now we're in sight of success. If it's money you want, you shall be gorged with it. You know that's the least part of what I have been fighting for, but it means a lot to you, and if you've any sense, you'll stay here and get your share. On the other hand, if you try to break up my plans, you've got to get out, whether your clients will follow you or not, and you'd better do it now! I don't intend to have my career shattered because you can't wait a year or two to move to the suburbs. It's too absurd! ”

In the midst of his harsh lecture, John paused, and broke into a smile.

“ This war's got into our blood,” he stated. “ We don't seem to be able to talk without sobs and heroics. Don't let's squabble any more. It's absolutely useless. You know I always have to have my own way. It's my one redeeming vice. I'll plead guilty to being obstinate and anything else you want, but you know

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I'll play fair. If I weren't trying to deal squarely with you, my cue would be to get rid of you at once, and keep for myself all our future profits, instead of dividing them. As you pointed out, I've already gained the full benefit of your social position, but there's no such idea in my head. So smile at me pleasantly and tell me I'm a beast, but that you can't help liking me somehow. Blame the whole thing on me when you talk to Helen, and tell her you'd throw me over in a minute, if you weren't sure I'd give her a steam railroad for a tenth wedding anniversary present. You might also ask me up to dinner to-night. Helen has much more respect for me than you have, or than she has for you, for that matter. When I leave your house, she'll come to you and beg you to let her discharge the baby's nurse and give her wages to me for investment."

John turned once more to his neglected mail and began methodically opening envelope after envelope, hastily running his eye over the contents of each letter. It seemed that the interview was over. Chase rose to leave the room, apparently reconciled to submission.

"I don't want Helen to discharge the nurse," was his parting shot, "but you're such a plausible devil, I'm afraid if she listens to you long enough, she'll discharge me."

"You're safe," John answered, smiling at him frankly over the top of a letter, "I won't use my eloquence to lure Helen from you. Send me a stenographer instead."

II

THE stenographer had not yet begun taking John's dictation, and Arthur Chase had hardly been seated in his own room, when the clerk brought him a message, asking him to return to John's office. Mr. Howard wanted to talk to him at once.

"First you drive me out of here, and then you fetch me back," he grumbled, paying no attention to John's significant glance, intended to remind him of the stenographer's presence.

"You may go, Miss Stewart," he told her. "I'll dictate these letters later in the morning. I want to talk to Mr. Chase now. Sit down, Arthur," John ordered, as the door closed behind the retreating girl. "I have something bad to offset your good news."

He placed in Arthur's hand a letter, which ran:

Messrs. Howard & Chase,
Attorneys for the Monumental
Cotton Duck Company,
East Lexington Street,
City.

DEAR SIRS:

In view of the prevailing conditions of unrest in the business world, due to the war and the resultant demands made upon us by our customers, we feel that we shall be unable to carry longer the indebtedness due us by the Monumental Cotton Duck Company. We are really overwhelmed by applications for loans, and have decided that, in justice to ourselves, our available capital ought to

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be placed at the disposal of depositors whose accounts are more active and whose borrowings are intended to meet the seasonal demands of typical mercantile enterprises. The Monumental does not seem to us to fall within this group. Its indebtedness to us is, in fact, part of its working capital and, in our opinion, ought to form part of its funded, rather than its floating, debt.

We are, therefore, giving you timely notice of our desire that the next note of the corporation, amounting to \$25,000, and falling due ten days hence, be paid, instead of being renewed. We also desire the three succeeding notes, of similar amounts, to be met at maturity.

We are sending a similar notice to the Treasurer of the Company.

Very truly yours,

THE TWELFTH NATIONAL BANK
OF BALTIMORE

By John M. Reynolds,
Cashier.

Chase read the letter carefully and whistled a low note of annoyance. "It's exasperating, isn't it?" was his comment.

"Exasperating," John exclaimed, "you might as well call an earthquake exasperating."

"Oh, come now," Arthur said, "it isn't as bad as all that. You'll get it straightened out somehow," he added, with confident faith in John's invincible resourcefulness.

John stared straight ahead of him with a troubled expression. "I've got to get it straightened out somehow, but I swear I don't see how. The Monumental can't go on without the money it owes the bank. It can't even pay its debts and quit solvent, and yet its

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prospects were never brighter. I have almost worked out, through Scanlon in Washington, a scheme to get it a share of the army contracts. In two years, its stock will be worth par, but to-day it simply needs every penny it can beg, borrow or steal. To pay off even part of its debts is impossible. It's hard enough to pay the interest. It would mean bankruptcy."

"Well," Arthur suggested, "there are other banks in the city, aren't there?"

John met the question with another.

"Didn't you ever read the organization papers of the Monumental?" he demanded,—“its certificate of incorporation, the deed of trust securing its bonds and its prospectus? I remember telling you to read them."

"Yes," Arthur replied, uncertainly, "I read them, but I'm afraid they didn't mean much to me."

"No, I'm afraid they didn't," John agreed. "However, they're going to mean a good deal to you now. We can't get the money from any other bank, because the first thing we'd be asked for, would be a statement. We're in no position to make a new statement at this time. The present condition of the company would not tally with the organization scheme. The common stock is mostly water. The bonds cover property not yet worth half the debt it's supposed to secure. The property will be worth all of it, and more, in a year or two, but it isn't to-day. If we're let alone, there's a

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fortune in the mills. If we're pushed hard now, we're in for an awful crash."

Both partners thought in silent intensity for a few minutes. Then the facile Arthur gave birth to an idea.

"John!" he exclaimed excitedly, "I've got the solution! You must charge Cameron twenty-five thousand dollars as a fee in the easement case, tell him we can't put the money into the trust company, and pay it to the bank."

In spite of his perplexity, John indulged in the smile one wears when a favorite child says something particularly quaint.

"Really, Arthur," he said, with good-humored scorn, "some day, when you thrust an insane remark like that at some harassed devil, who lacks my magnificent self-control, he will seize a paper-weight and crush in your skull, just to find out what it's lined with. Haven't you sense enough to see that if we could tear twenty-five thousand in cash out of Cameron in ten days, and break our promise to him, we would just have lost his good will without any benefit to us? Two weeks later, another note for the same amount will fall due. How will you pay that? And there will be two more notes after the second one. We'd have killed off Cameron and thrown away our money, without saving the Monumental. You'd have put off its bankruptcy just two weeks."

"Well," Chase admitted, shamefacedly, "I guess

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I'm wrong. It'll have to smash then, that's all I can see. Our stock didn't cost us much. We'll just charge it off as a loss."

John Howard's face clearly showed his utter inability to understand how any man could look at a problem and understand so little of its meaning.

"Arthur," he sighed, "sometimes I almost despair of making you into a millionaire. You can't wash your hands of a thing like this, or calmly abandon it, as you would a burnt-out cigar. I organized this company. I financed it. I induced Berg & Company to sell its bonds. I got our clients to put their money into it. If the mills close down, the whole scheme of its organization will be attacked. I'll be the scapegoat, although what I did will be called brilliant if the company makes money. I only did the same things every other successful organizer does, but if the mills fail, everybody who has lost a dollar in the matter will blame it on me. I'll be thought an unsafe man. We would never recover the ground we'd lose. All the new connections I have worked so hard to form will be snapped at one blow. I simply must find some way out."

"Can't we borrow some money somewhere?" Chase suggested, more timidly this time. "If you paid the bank part of the debt, you could gain time, maybe, and float some more bonds, just as the bank in its letter seems to suggest."

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“That idea has sense in it,” John assured him, as though anxious to encourage him to further thought. “It occurred to me, too. But we can’t work it. We can’t borrow any money without hurting ourselves with men who ought to be led to think we can raise all the cash we need. We can’t borrow much, anyhow. It’s a bad time, in the midst of a war, to try to sell bonds, and most important of all, even if we could borrow part of the debt, we wouldn’t be given any indulgence by the Twelfth National. The bank doesn’t really want us to pull out of this hole. At least, its cashier doesn’t, and he’s in complete control there now. I’ve been thinking for some time Reynolds was anxious to cause as much trouble as he could for us. He knows I believe him to be a weak man, and he’s been noticing the growth of our influence with the directors. Two of the board are already friends and clients of ours, and I suppose he thinks we lead them to criticise his policies. He has sense enough to know I want to control the bank some day and that if he’s still there when that time comes, he won’t be there many minutes afterwards. He decided this was his chance to get us out of the way once and for all.

“Of course, the bank will lose some money if the Monumental goes to the wall, and it won’t lose a penny if we’re left in peace, but the bank’s loss won’t trouble Reynolds. It will even help him. He’ll be able to say

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smugly he knew from the beginning the loan wasn't safe."

"How about going over his head?" Arthur asked.

"You know, as well as I, the President of the bank is a nonentity. Old Cameron is the largest stockholder, but he's been too busy with other things to give the bank much individual attention. I couldn't go to him with this story. He hates people who ask him for help, and, besides, he'd want to know about the entire transaction. After he'd heard it, he would tell me Reynolds was quite right. The Monumental didn't deserve to have a dollar of any bank's money, because it isn't a solid enterprise, and in the future, I'd never be able to use him in my plans."

"You speak of Cameron," Arthur struck in irritably, "as though he were an ambassador direct from Heaven. It's always Cameron! This would annoy him, the other thing would displease him. This affair of the Monumental is vital. Let's make Cameron pull us out of it, even if we can't ever use him again."

John shook his head. "Cameron isn't a man," he argued, "who can be used against his will. You have to make him think there's some interest of his own at stake. There isn't here. Our success is nothing to Cameron. The more powerful we grow, the bigger fees we'll charge him. He understands that perfectly well. And, anyhow, he's the key to our whole situation in this city. If we can make proper use of him, we're

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in a position to learn everything we need to know about conditions, and to find the beginning point for every scheme we plan. Without Cameron we'd have to fight him until he'd been unseated and then find someone of our own to take his place. That would take too long."

John lapsed again into silence. After a long time, he resumed the discussion of their dilemma.

"Somehow and in some way Reynolds has to be frightened into leaving this line of credit undisturbed. There's no use in pleading with him. He'd chortle with glee if he could be sure how good his chance is to cripple us. And there's no use, either, in trying to get another bank to lend us the money without demanding a statement. The effort wouldn't succeed. Reynolds might learn of it and it doesn't sound businesslike. We're trying to create a reputation for being business men—and keen ones. Besides, the Twelfth National is our logical point of attack. We hold stock in it. We're going to dominate it. Therefore, I've got to make Reynolds understand his slim chance of keeping his job depends on pleasing me."

"If you could only get Cameron to intercede for us," Chase moaned.

"Nonsense! you don't frighten men with intercession. If I could make Reynolds think Cameron would punish him for getting in my way—but he

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knows the old man too well to believe he'd use his power merely to give a lift to an utter stranger.

"Anyhow, that's our problem boiled down. It's like the Sphinx's riddle. If we don't solve it, it swallows us alive—body and bones! We can go off to the war for all the use we'll be here for the next ten years. Perhaps when nobody can remember what's become of the Monumental Cotton Duck Company we can slink back in our middle age, and try to do again what we spent six years failing to do while we were young. No sir," he ripped out with deadly earnestness, "I'm not going to let a driveling old fool like Reynolds spoil my plans, just so he may hold on to his miserable, pottering little job. I've had too hard a time getting this far to be bowled over now. I'm going after Reynolds."

"But how?" Chase demanded. "For the life of I can't see how."

"No, you wouldn't," John retorted. "I can't tell you how. But between now and the end of the week, he's going to write me a letter, begging me not to pay back that money—begging—do you understand? Did I ever tell you I was surely going to do something, and then not do it? There must be some way to make Reynolds believe we can control Cameron's stock. I'm sure to find out what that way is. I'll find it if I have to sell myself, body and soul, to do it!"

Suddenly, John's expression changed. The glow

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of enthusiastic confidence died out of his face. He seemed to sink into the deepest reverie, a practice utterly at variance with his usual habits during office hours. Arthur, thoroughly alarmed at the situation of danger and possible disgrace which confronted him, together with his partner, tried vainly to read his thoughts. If he were really thinking out the puzzle, it were best not to disturb him. But he did not appear to be thinking at all. His mind seemed to be miles away, feeding itself on fugitive memories—unhappy memories, rather than on facts. After what seemed to Arthur a long silence, he called gently, "John," and, receiving no answer, tapped him sharply on the arm.

John Howard came back with a start to the world of affairs he meant to dominate.

"I was giving myself a vacation, Arthur," he admitted, with an embarrassment alien to his everyday conduct. "I was thinking of something that happened to me years ago, before you knew me. I believe I'm glad you dragged me back. But before I went off on this excursion, I thought of a plan. You needn't worry about this matter of the Monumental any longer. We can straighten it out. I don't intend using the idea I just chanced on, unless I can think of no other. But if it needs be, this one will do the work."

"Aren't you going to tell me about it?" Arthur

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asked, completely amazed at the entire course of events.

John's apparent uneasiness and embarrassment became even more marked.

"No," he replied slowly, "I'm not. If I hit on some other plan, I'll explain it to you. If I do what's in my mind, you'll get a clear enough idea without my saying anything further. I'll rely on you, Arthur, to be discreet, more discreet than you ever were in all your life. I don't want you to whisper a word of this morning's talk to anyone—not even to Helen—not even to me. Don't ever remind me of it again by anything you say or do.

"I know all this sounds absurdly mysterious, but you'll understand it too soon, perhaps. You'll have a chance to show how much real delicacy you have. If you make good, I'll never forget it to my dying day."

Arthur was sincerely troubled. Why on earth should John become so amazingly emotional, John, the practical, the clear-sighted, the man who had always seemed to abhor sentimentality, the man who had not even once, in his discussion of the coming disaster to the Cotton Duck Company, thought of, much less mentioned, the hundreds of employees who might find themselves without work.

But to resist an appeal to his friendship was not within Arthur's power.

"All right, old man," he said, without any per-

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ceptible pause. "My future shall be patterned after the lowly clam. If Reynold's useful life ends to-night as suddenly and mysteriously as this morning's talk, I'll tell Helen I always knew he had a weak heart."

John's smile lacked any genuine merriment. "Get along with you then," he ordered. "I've a mess of things I simply must clean up to-day. And, Arthur," he called, as the door was about to close, "don't telephone anything to Helen about my coming to dinner. I'm afraid I'll have work to do to-night—hard work at that."

III

THAT same night, just after dinner, John Howard stood at the mirror in his room, putting the last touches to his immaculate attire. It was a most attractive figure which glanced back at him from the other side of the glass—in spite of the troubled look in his eyes. But John wasn't thinking of his personal charms, although, subconsciously, he counted them as potent factors in the work before him. The plan he had chanced upon that morning was the only way out of his dilemma—utterly distasteful to him though it was.

Even now he had been revolving his problem in his mind, to make certain he was not paying an unnecessary price to save his career from shipwreck; but he could find no flaw in his logic. If Reynolds could not be forced to withhold the bank's demand, the Monumental Company would be driven into bankruptcy. The money could never be borrowed elsewhere than from the Twelfth National. An investigation of the Monumental's affairs would ruin him. Oh, he would still get plenty of cases to try! People would be glad enough to buy his convincing arguments and his keen cross-examinations—no matter what they might think of his recklessness or his ethics as a financier; but his dream of power would be over. No cost was too great if it would save him from being forced to stand

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idly by, while the structure he had reared with so much skill, self-denial and pain, went tottering to the ground. Well, then, Reynolds must be made to abandon his purpose. He must be frightened, and Cameron's name was the weapon to be used. An appeal to Cameron was impossible—worse than impossible—because it would surely be futile and would, moreover, be putting a weapon in the hands of a wily, unscrupulous and powerful man—his own client to-day, of course, but to-morrow, perhaps, his mortal enemy. Reynolds, on the other hand, would not be deluded by a mere pretense of Cameron's support. There must be some element of plausibility too strong for doubt. The treaty of alliance must be actually and formally proclaimed. Therefore, the problem, to John's trained mind, rapidly yielded the only possible result, and with a wry face and a rebellious soul, he proved the answer to the sum to be the correct one.

Suppose he were in a position to say to Reynolds with a haughty air: "Sir, the attitude you have taken is a most unfriendly one. It clearly shows the inability of this administration to recognize the best interests of the bank. I mean to take up the matter to-day with Mr. Cameron. Perhaps you are not aware of the fact that he's my prospective father-in-law, as well as my client. I think my advice will have some weight with him. We shall take steps for a special stockholders' meeting and a complete reversal of this bank's policies.

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Of course, the Monumental can get all the money it needs elsewhere, but I don't intend that my holdings in the Twelfth National, or his much larger ones, shall be jeopardized." Reynolds would cringe. He was that sort of man. John would never have to talk to Cameron about the affairs of the Monumental. Reynolds would serve him like a slave. The son-in-law of the largest stockholder might demand what he would, and his commands would be abjectly obeyed. Along that path lay safety. In a hundred other ways his new relationship might be made a powerful wand before which gateways, long and wearily besieged, would fly open, but the price seemed indeed a staggering one to John. In his labored journey, he had already paid heavily enough for portage over some of the difficult places.

At the beginning, when it seemed almost impossible to enter the outer courts of the temple of finance, he had felt compelled to join forces with the amiable, but utterly inefficient, Chase, so that through his relatives he might find a necessary entering wedge. At the time that necessity had seemed bitter and intolerable. Later on, John had learned to fraternize with men whom he secretly despised; he had championed causes from which his sympathies revolted. One by one, he had parted with his individual tastes, preferences and personal desires, because they constituted too heavy a burden to be borne by a man who intended

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to travel so far and so fast as he ; but sophisticated as he was to do, and do cheerfully and promptly, unpleasant things when they were essential to his plans, this final and supreme sacrifice of his ideals filled him with misgivings and dismay. He didn't want to owe anything to a woman's aid, to begin with. In spite of all his planning to make use of others, he had a certain virile independence which shrank from utilizing this type of help. "A marriage for money," people would term it. Of course, that would not be true. He didn't want, and had no idea of taking, a dollar of Hilda Cameron's money. He had never before even considered making use of a wife for the influential connections she might have—although there had been many girls who would readily have lent themselves to that purpose. He could manage such things without selling himself. But to-night, his choice was between Hilda and utter ruin. It was not to help himself on his upward climb, but to save himself from being hurled over the precipice, that he felt forced to clutch her hand. It would be easier to die than to confess the impossibility of his ever entering upon his promised kingdom. Even though he must give up the best of his life and the best of himself to mount this throne, it would be better to rule as a mutilated cripple than never to hold the longed-for sceptre of power in his hand.

It was not perfectly clear to John himself why he

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hated with such intensity this marriage he felt unable to avoid. Hilda Cameron would make a perfectly presentable wife—not pretty, certainly—but rather distinguished-looking. She had been most expensively educated, and if she knew nothing thorough well, she could, at least, talk intelligently, and sometimes even wittily, about every subject under the sun. She was wilful, of course, and selfish—what else could you expect of the only daughter of Daniel Cameron? But she wouldn't interfere with any of his plans; she wouldn't demand any silly display of sentiment, and she could play her part in the world he meant to dominate with grace, and even with some charm. She wouldn't refuse to marry him either. He never had a doubt on that score. All women liked him. He could get her if he made up his mind, and now there was nothing else to be done.

Why then was it so obnoxious to him to wed with this highly eligible, and by no means undesirable, girl? He tried to discover the causes of his own reluctance, but six years of neglect had blunted somewhat his powers of self-analysis. He realized clearly, however, that it was not really Hilda he objected to. He did not want to be married at all. At thirty he had come to resent the idea of sharing the intimacies of his life with anyone. But the most potent cause of his revolt was his unwillingness to defile his memories of what he had come to believe the one great passion of his life. Like

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many another man whose actions have been ruthlessly purged of sentimentality, John had abandoned himself utterly to this one secret emotional phase of thought and feeling.

He had loved Margaret, he repeated over and over to himself. No man had ever loved any woman more tenderly. And he had given her up. He had sacrificed her to the demands of his insatiable career. At thirty, he was able to recognize fully that in so sacrificing her, he had been actuated by a boyish impulse, and that in his manner of acting, he had behaved with a deadly seriousness almost grotesque. But he also knew that his boyish instinct had advised him truly. Margaret would, undoubtedly, have hampered him in his work. Whatever he might pretend to himself, he was not truly sorry they had parted. Every time he had visited his partner and Arthur's somewhat unmanageable Helen, he had thanked his particular guardian angel for letting him live through the first stormy years of practice without the handicap of soft, clinging arms. Margaret, as a lost love, was a more inspiring thought to him than as a burdensome wife. He had never thought of seeking her out and endeavoring to renew their friendship. He knew vaguely that she had gone off to some college in the North. He hoped fervently he would never again meet her. The actual Margaret could add nothing, and might take away much, from the Margaret he loved to remember.

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With this adoration of a beautiful ideal, once revealed to him, always to be longed for, but never again to be regained, he satisfied the cravings of an emotional nature that must otherwise have been starved. This worship was peculiarly adapted to John's limitations. Its ritual demanded no sacrifices whatsoever. It caused no disturbance of his plans or habits. It gave a certain softness and beauty to his life, yet could be banished whenever inconvenient, until some more opportune season of leisure and solitude.

Now he must become an apostate to this vision of the past—must substitute for his dream-princess a woman of flesh and blood, in no way the equal of the girl he had lost. He was to be false to the new love as well as to the old—profaning his memories, and entering upon his marriage with the ever-present image of another woman enshrined in his thoughts.

As he turned away from the mirror, he was filled with an unreasoning hatred of all mankind, and above all others, hatred of himself and of Reynolds. It was not like John to hate the men whom he felt forced to hurl out of his path. In a condescending fashion, he was usually sorry for them—driven blindly, as they were, to do battle with their superior. But for Reynolds, who was only striving, with a pitiful malignity, to cling to his tiny point of vantage, he could feel no mercy. The man had forced him to strip from himself the last rag of his idealism. He saw himself naked,

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gaunt and horrible. How could he find it in his heart to forgive the creature who had brought him to this pass? He would make Reynolds pay to the last bitter penny for the suffering he had known all through this miserable day, and the humiliation which was still to be endured to-night. He would requite fully the pang he had felt, when on his way home he had stopped in the florist's shop to buy for Hilda the flowers he had not been permitted to give to Margaret six years before. He would punish Reynolds for the paradox of Life's ironical parallel, which for a second time was now forcing him to a cruel and supreme issue on the night of a great legal victory.

He would reap dire vengeance, he told himself, as he took the great box of flowers in his arm and strode towards the door, because with all this misery in his soul, he must seem gay, blithe, ardent, tender and, at last, triumphant. He must struggle and plead for the love he did not desire and could not return. And not only to-night must he play this farcical rôle but every night—always. That this should be inflicted on him—that he, the hero, should be driven to play the conscienceless mountebank—was intolerable. John could not have borne to think of it, had he not tempered his self-pity with stern thoughts of the havoc he meant to hurl upon the man who had thus twisted awry the orderly fabric of his life.

IV

AFTER John had been ushered into the Cameron drawing-room, he was left to wait many minutes before Hilda made her appearance. It was a good omen, he told himself. She was making herself attractive to receive him. That was well. But to-night, unfortunately, he found himself a disquieting and impatient companion. He crossed the luxuriously appointed room to the open window, and looked listlessly and discontentedly at the trim but stately beauty of Mt. Vernon Place, nestled at the foot of the tall white shaft of the Washington Monument. Through the open window, all the perfume of the early spring foliage drifted to him. Men and maids, arm in arm, hurried past, each pair happily conscious of the fragrance and intoxication of the night and that they, themselves, were young, and were together. It was, in truth, the season of mating, for birds and men, and to John, too, at last, the call of spring had come—but it had come hideously disguised, debased, deformed. He was to know marriage, but never to experience the meaning of wedded love.

If he were only like other men, he told himself, content with simple things, able to accept the quiet, orderly round of peaceful labor and domestic tranquillity. At that instant, he wished passionately he

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had been so created. But he knew he had not been, and he knew, also, that in his normal moments, he did not wish to be. He, who aspired to be the master, was above all men the slave of his own plans and purposes, and another link in the chain which bound him he must now forge with his own hands.

A light step was heard outside the door, and John hastily assumed command of himself. The spoilt darlings of wealth and luxury were not to be wooed in sombre fashion. With a vigorous effort, he brushed away all ideas which might clash with the task before him. As he came forward to greet Hilda, his attitude of mind was precisely as though he were rising in the court-room to plead a difficult and unpopular cause. He was preparing to be pleasing, ingratiating and convincing; to overcome whatever objections of thought or feeling might be arrayed against him. And he was in a larger sense doing it for precisely the same reason. A mysterious, never - to - be - understood impulse — stronger than himself—Destiny—Fate—God—whatever you might choose to call it—had retained him from the first to strive throughout his life to win, whether it were right or wrong, a definite battle. He was being true—even in his dishonor, to his own Great Client.

He hastened swiftly from the window to take Hilda's hand, but she courtesied mockingly, instead of extending it.

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"Hail to the Conqueror," she proclaimed with a provoking laugh. "I kneel in spirit before the victor of the great Battle of Annapolis. I'd do it actually, but it would muss my gown. It's rather a pretty gown—don't you think?"

"I haven't looked at it," he informed her. "My glances were occupied with the girl inside. Aren't you going to shake hands with me?"

"I'm afraid to suggest anything so presumptuous," she retorted. "At the most, I thought I might be allowed to kiss your hand. That's the custom among emperors, I believe; but, first, I meant to make sure you had actually come to see me—not father."

"There seems to be a certain lack of originality in this house," John remarked, as they seated themselves. "Your butler asked the same question. I came to see your father's daughter."

"Well, now, you see her, all dressed in her best bib and tucker, to receive the pretty gentleman who can only call on languishing ladies when he's not too busy winning great cases for their more important fathers. Do you know I'm glad you came and I'm sorry to see you?"

"The priestess of the oracle was a woman, too," was John's comment. "Her riddles were like yours, but if my memory serves me, she was usually old and rather ugly. You'd better explain."

"Well, then," she told him, "I'm glad you called

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on me, because it has tripled my importance in this household. When your card was brought upstairs, Dad was sure you wanted to talk to him. What could a brilliant young lawyer, who had just changed the law of Maryland, have to say to a poor female earthworm? I'm sorry to see you, because I've come to hate the sound of your name! I've heard how remarkable you are till I want to stand on a table and shriek! Father fed me all through dinner with eulogies of you. No man should be talked of in such fashion while he is still alive. How self-possessed you are! How logical! How well you know the law! How remarkable it is that a man of your age should be so utterly without flaw! Bah! If you'd only run off with a policeman's wife, I could forgive you everything."

"Policemen's wives are so plain!" he objected. "There is no hope of your marrying a policeman, I suppose? You must grant me easier terms. Look, I've brought some flowers to plead for my forgiveness."

Everybody brought flowers to Miss Cameron. She found it annoying to pretend raptures of delight over each successive offering. But as she lifted these from the box, even she was awakened to a start of surprise. For John, thoroughly alive to each possibility in the preparation of his case, had given unusual thought and displayed a complete disregard for expense in their selection. They were not pink roses. Even had such

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commonplace flowers been suited to his purpose, it would have hurt him too much to offer to Hilda the nosegay which belonged to the lost Margaret. They were a huge cluster of orchids of wonderful and nameless tints, shading from one delicate color into another. Rare at any time, they seemed all the more exotic at this season of the lilac and the daffodil. The girl turned from their beauty to look at her important young visitor and to wonder why he had chosen to bring this almost unique gift to her.

"I never saw such superb orchids," she murmured. "Tell me why you felt like bringing me anything so lovely."

That might have been the opportunity for a less adroit man, but John had seen in many hard-fought legal battles the folly of too much haste, and he only said:

"I've been thinking about you most of the day. These flowers seem somehow to symbolize you."

Hilda was frankly pleased. Of course, she assumed the money value of gifts meant nothing to John. He must earn fabulous sums. Her father had informed her of the fee he anticipated being called upon to pay to Howard & Chase, and rich as she was, it startled her. But to be told that she had been thought of during most of a busy day by a man not only brilliant enough to move to enthusiasm her mercilessly critical father, but young, interesting and handsome in the

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bargain, was a thought which might rouse a glimmer of excitement in the most indifferent young woman; and Hilda was not indifferent. She was morbidly fond of admiration, and at the same time, keenly chagrined at perceiving how much of what admiration she did receive was paid to Daniel Cameron's daughter, rather than to Hilda Cameron.

"I'd like to believe they symbolize me," she reflected thoughtfully. "Why do you think so? I'm not pretty. These flowers are beautiful. I'm afraid our only similarity is that we're both expensive."

John smiled quietly. The commonly accepted adage, which informs us one may always be safe in telling any woman of her beauty, had never deceived him. He did not intend to be trite.

"The orchids are not beautiful in the ordinary sense of the word," he startled her by saying. "They surely have no conventional beauty in their design. But there's something rare about them. There's a wealth of charm in their subtle shading, to people who have taste enough to understand. They are hardly like flowers at all. They have their own character. That's why they seem to me to be like you."

Of course, this was flattery; she was twenty-five and knew how much of conversation ought to be discounted. But it was flattery of a variety somewhat at variance from the staple brand to which she had grown accustomed.

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“ You know how to say pretty things to a woman,” she conceded. “ Yet you don’t weary any of us with too much of your valuable presence. Confess now how immeasurably superior you feel to all of us dainty dolls! Wasn’t it because you seemed to need relaxation after your great case that you hunted me up to-night? ”

Her question was a bitter jest to John.

“ I never was less frivolous in all my life than when I made up my mind to spend this evening with you,” he protested. “ You must remember,” he went on, deciding the minute had arrived for pressing his attack somewhat more definitely, “ how different my life has been from yours or from that of any of the other men you know. I’m only thirty now. At twenty-four, I hadn’t a dollar nor a friend who could give me a dollar’s worth of business. I’ve had to spend almost every minute, night and day, in doing my work. There’s been many a night when I have been aching to enjoy myself,—to be talking with you, for example,—when I simply forced myself to remain chained to my desk, not because I wanted to make money, but because I know, whether you’ll admit it or not, that no woman worth her salt has any use for men who are failures, any more than men have. And I never intended to be a failure. That’s why I seem to have taken myself so seriously. It was because I never had time to be young. I had to wait for the pleasant part of life until I had earned the right to it.

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"You'll notice, though," he added, significantly, "that to-night, the first night in my life when I had the right to be sure my success wasn't a mere passing thing, I came straight to you. Does that look as though I thought you were a doll?"

Hilda listened with grave approval. He, the great man, had stooped to explain—to confide in her. She even brought herself to the point of a most unusual humility.

"Forgive me if I've ever been 'snippy' to you," she said. "Really, I think you're nice." She looked at him furtively, ready to blaze into anger if he seemed amused at the condescension of so inferior a being. But he made no such blunder. It seemed as though her approval were really precious to him.

"I'm glad," he announced earnestly. "I, for my part, think even better of you."

He smiled enigmatically, and she fell into his snare, just as he had made sure she would.

"Tell me what you think about me," she said, half commanding, half entreating.

Here was the chance for another grave blunder, but John was now fully alert, so intent on his own skilful twists and turns of speech that he forgot all his repugnance for what he was doing, in the pure intellectual joy of accomplishing a task no one could have done with more adroitness.

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"Are you sure you want me to tell you the truth?" he demanded, artfully heightening the dramatic interest of his coming recital. "I am no dealer in empty compliments."

"I'm sure," she insisted, eagerly, "I shall despise you if you tell me anything disagreeable, but I'll hate you even more if you tell me nothing."

He made a grimace of mock dismay. "Whatever I do then, hate is to be my reward. My safest course is silence. Brave men were rewarded after another fashion by ladies in olden times."

"But I'm not old," she retorted. "I'm young and irresponsible, and simply must have my own way always. I think I inherit the failing from father. So you'll have to answer me sooner or later. Come, don't be horrid; tell me what you think of me."

He looked at her with a searching intentness, and said slowly and without a trace of banter in his voice:

"If you will have it then—I think you're a girl of wonderful possibilities, slowly killing every one of them in an unfortunate environment." She darted an amazed glance at the solemn man. This was anything but the kind of talk she had anticipated. Without seeming to notice her wide-eyed interest, though he missed not one trace of it, he continued his analysis of the girl's character.

"You have dormant in you your father's wonderful strength and quickness of mind, and you have the

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germ of a fine feminine sympathy and tenderness besides; but you're afraid to let these things grow. You hide the charm under the light cleverness your class affects to think smart, and your strength is frittered away in doing things anyone could do. You have no need to exert yourself, because everyone pays you homage anyhow—homage your father, not you, really earned. You need to be placed among people to whom money means nothing; people who will judge you on your own merits. The flattery of the stupid creatures about you has been too easy to get. All true appreciation has been cheapened for you. You've come to be suspicious of all men, because those who hover about you are worthless. You've become skeptical even of your own powers.

“You need a new atmosphere. Your father might give it to you, if he were willing to take the trouble, but he treats you like a baby instead. If you develop what's really in you, you could become the most interesting and the most interested woman I ever knew. If you stand still, in five years you'll be an exact duplicate of every other rich woman in the city.”

He paused to take note of the result of his words. He had made her think; that was clear. He knew she was not vexed, whether she might pretend to be or not, so he put a note of anxiety into his resonant voice, as he asked:

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"Are you angry with me because, in my crude way, I'm trying to save you from wasting yourself? Didn't you want the truth?"

"No, I'm not a bit angry," she answered brightly, though with a pleasant seriousness. "Really, I'm not so worth while as you suppose, though I like you to think me so. But in spite of your protests, you are certainly the most subtle flatterer I ever met. You emphasize insistently one fact which could not fail to please any girl: The mind which worked out the problems in this Tax Case and a dozen other twisted cases has bent itself to study and analyze me. You must have thought about me a lot. Any girl would like to believe that. We hate to be understood, but we love to have you try."

He was ready now to test the strength of the impression he had so delicately striven to create, and he announced, with quiet emphasis, "I've spent much more time and thought on you than I have on the easement appeal or any other case." His voice was low and vibrant. Without being sure just what he meant, she was agitated, confused. She didn't even demand to know why he had cared to use his time and thought in this way. But her eyes asked and they were promptly answered.

"It was because," he went on, "you were more important to me than anything else. I have to learn to understand you and to make you understand your-

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self. Because you're going to marry me, Hilda Cameron."

He reached forward and grasped her hand. He was carried completely away by his own persuasiveness and charm. For one instant, he had forgotten everything else but the convincing climax of the drama of which he was the actor and the author. A moment before, he had been keenly appreciative of his own splendid technique—just the proper period of introduction, the gradual awakening of interest, the denouement, with its vivid, but not too abrupt, element of surprise. But now his cause had completely swept him along with it. For an instant he really was the breathless lover and this girl the all-desired woman;—so perfect and facile an advocate was this John Howard!

He clasped her hand eagerly, in the surge of dramatic realization of the possibilities of his part in the love scene. Hilda searched his face wistfully, but could find nothing there but what she might have hoped to see. There was nothing else for her to discover. The orator had become one with the cause he was pleading.

But Hilda, persecuted from early childhood by fortune hunters, was not wholly without her doubts, and they found quick and earnest speech.

"What can you want with me?" she demanded excitedly. "They say you're something of a genius. I'm painfully commonplace. I'm not pretty nor bril-

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liant, nor even particularly kind. My only merit is my father."

He was ready for that objection and subconsciously thankful that his protestations were not without a larger measure of truth than some other suitor's might have been.

"Listen, Hilda," he urged, "don't you see how you prove all I said about you? Your petty companions have made you see all men as worthless fortune hunters. You're in danger of believing there isn't anyone big enough to peer over the money bags piled in front of you. I don't want a pretty puppet for a wife. I don't want a genius. I want you. And you need me! You need a man who has a different idea of human values than those you find here. As for the money, we'll settle that once and for all. I don't accept alms from any man, not even from the father of my wife. I don't want one dollar of your father's money—now or ever; and you shan't have one either. If you ever find me taking a penny of his, except what I earn just as I would if he never had a daughter, or letting you take a penny, that day you may have your divorce."

His never-failing assurance, his calm assumption of an ability to control her absolutely, swept her along with the tide of his dominance. Her objections grew more timid. She seemed almost to want them to be beaten down.

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"You don't really know me very well. You haven't seen me enough to know what I am."

"I know you well enough," he insisted. "Doesn't it honestly seem to you, yourself, as though I know you better than anyone else you ever met? I don't have to see people every day for years in order to understand them. I can find out promptly what I want—and I want you," he repeated.

"Are you sure?" she asked, uncertainly. She smiled doubtfully. "I am a real vixen sometimes. Don't I need a man who has more patience than you? I think sometimes you're too much like me. I always have to have my own way!"

"And that's just what you shan't have," was his prompt rejoinder, but he laughed happily as he flung down his defiance. "You want to live a real life. You don't want a lackey for a husband. You've had too many lackeys around you already. You shall have your own way whenever I think it will injure neither you nor me. I'll think that often, Hilda,—as often as I can. You shall have everything of life I can give you—and I can give you things you have hardly dreamed of."

He meant this, too, from the bottom of his soul. He would be very kind to her. She would be to him another, but a dearer and more feminine, Arthur Chase. He would be considerate, affectionate and thoughtful. She, like Arthur, would be a burden, but he would

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never let her know. She, like Arthur, would have served his turn in an hour of need and would, by way of reward, receive a lifetime of ease and shelter. He seized both her hands and drew her toward him.

"Come," he commanded, "tell me you're glad! Tell me I don't have to urge you any more."

She did not draw herself away from him, but neither did she yield herself to his embrace. She looked up into his face, without a vestige of the former gaiety and lightness of mood she habitually wore. She was solemn, almost awed.

"John," she said very softly, "I couldn't tell you I wasn't fond of you. I have always wanted you to love me. It made me miserable because you never seemed to notice me. I always thought you splendid, though I tried to force myself to be as indifferent as you seemed. But for all that, I wouldn't marry a man who didn't love me—no matter how much I cared for him. It would be degrading. So I want to know, are you sure—oh, terribly sure—you love me?"

John's superb and stately drama, real enough during many minutes to have enthralled the playwright himself, suddenly became a thing of rags and tatters. He found himself standing penitent and utterly miserable, a cowardly dastard, with an innocent and betrayed girl in his arms. He had meant to be kind to her. He had never intended to use her wealth. He had genuinely believed he could make her happy. His sympathy

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up to that time had been altogether with himself, thus forced into a marriage he had never desired, but in this instant, all these feelings were lost in a great and impotent compassion for this Hilda, who because of his wrong, would never receive the one great gift she demanded of life. She wanted love, the one thing he didn't have to give. For an instant his heart misgave him. If he could only tell her the truth—appeal to her warm, generous nature, explain how vital she was to his plans, and plead with her to take his hand, as a man might grasp that of a comrade going forth to fight a man's fight! If he could only play fair with this girl, who was about to trust him so completely! If he could only save himself without betraying her! But it could not be. The daughter of Daniel Cameron would never be moved by a suppliant. After all he had already said, anything less than the full price she demanded would cause her to loathe him, to shrink from him in a flame of humiliation and bitterness. For her sake, as well as his own, he had no choice but to complete the evil work he had begun. Perhaps she would never learn the counterfeit quality of his love. He would spend the balance of his life living out faithfully the lies he must repeat.

With no perceptible pause then, he took up his burden. Her question demanded caresses rather than words by way of reply, and he was not unequal to the situation. He knew with such precision the appropriate

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thing to do and say! But he realized that his speech was more convincing than his kisses, and lest she might find a trace of coldness in them, he made haste to say:

“Hilda, dear, I’ve had an odd life. It’s been one long up-hill climb. I told you I was cheated out of my youth. In many ways I am an old man. I’m afraid you’ll think I am not a very demonstrative lover. I wish I could bring to you all the boyish happiness you deserve. But just because I’ve been starved so long, I want you so tremendously now, and I do want you! Words have been my trade, yet I can’t tell you how much I need you!”

Her face lighted up at his skilful phrases. He had caught her imagination. She was necessary to him! Frivolous as she was, brilliant and courted as he was, still there was something she could give him. He would attain the color, the joy, the lightness of life through her. She forgot she was the queen of her petty little circle. She forgot she was the daughter of Daniel Cameron. She only remembered that she was loved by a wonderful man, and somehow, strange as it was, he needed her to round out his life, to bring him a happiness he could never achieve alone.

“I am glad,” she murmured, “glad there is some one thing I can do for you! If your life had been like anyone else’s—like mine—you wouldn’t want me at all. I’m not much good, really, but I’ll try—oh, very, very hard—to fill your need.”

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John was awe-stricken. It seemed somehow, even though one knew better—knew that women as well as men were merely pawns in a great game, that a young girl's affections had a semblance of sacredness, yes, even to him! who did not believe much in holy things. In the next hour, he strove with much energy and concentration to be thoroughly charming. He intended to make Hilda completely happy,—far happier than if she had married some dull creature, who had really loved her, but who lacked his own brain and insight. That was the compromise he proposed to his scruples. And he was succeeding extremely well. Hilda seemed to throw away her reserved, haughty airs and graces and to revel in tender, intimate confidences. She was trying, evidently, in this one evening, to lay her whole soul bare to him, and in return, to explore all of his. He lent himself with rare patience and thoughtfulness to her plans—not any longer as a mere matter of policy. She was his now. He would not fail to hold her. He did it because he wanted in all truth to pay a fair price for what he was taking. It was not his habit to cheat. Men and women, of course, must yield to his plans, but he meant to be to all men and women a wise and considerate master, and above all others, he would be so to this girl.

Curiously enough, therefore, this hour of studious deception brought complete balm to his troubled

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thoughts. His spasm of horrified compassion for Hilda passed away entirely. She would suffer neither harm nor unhappiness in his hands. See how joyous he had made her already! She would never find him lacking. He could manage, somehow, always to give her the consideration, the imaginative sympathy, which would be better for her than some other man's stupid love. It was true it would call for no small amount of his precious energy. It would be rather hard on him, but he would render it—yes, cheerfully! It was only just.

He was unable to comprehend fully his own tranquillity. He remembered vividly the night of anguish he had spent after parting with Margaret. Even now, he believed his heart was still sore because of the wound he had then dealt to her and to himself. To-night, he had done something even more trying—something which struck at his past, his present and his future. There had been a brief spasm of pain and already, before the episode had been actually concluded, his mind and his conscience were at peace. He found time, in the midst of this strange betrothal night, to wonder what had happened to him in these six busy years. Had he become better or worse, now that he could chat and laugh and seem alternately tender and serious, as he planned out a future with this girl, whose love he had been forced to steal?

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Well, since it had to be done, he had given it the same thought and attention he would have devoted to any other task, and his result was no less perfect than he was accustomed to achieve. There remained but one more step to be taken. He must be free to speak of this proposed marriage to whomever he desired. A secret engagement would be worthless to him. He must be at liberty to hurl the name of Hilda's father full in the face of Reynolds; and Reynolds must be sure to find confirmation of the story from any gossip he might buttonhole on the street.

He was confident there would be no difficulty in gaining this last necessary object of his policy.

"I may tell people, mayn't I?" he asked eagerly, but not too eagerly. "I want to shout it to everyone I know. I'm almost afraid I couldn't keep such a secret, even if I tried."

"I thought you belonged to the profession which can keep a secret," she said gaily. "I understood lawyers prided themselves on that ability."

"Don't you know," he replied, "that a drunken man has no sense of pride, and you've intoxicated me? But I'm a paradox, because in spite of my drunken state, you've given me a new pride, and a wonderful one. Seriously," he added, "if we're going to be married half as soon as I hope, I'll have to begin immediately to make plans for a vacation. Think of it! I haven't left my work for one day in all these years.

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I must arrange long beforehand to keep prosy business details from interfering with our happiness."

She laughed at him mischievously. "You're so important!" she announced.

"I am," he retorted promptly. "I'm going to have Hilda Cameron for my wife."

"Well," she assented, "if you put it that way, I can refuse you nothing! But you have to begin your proclamations by telling father. Doesn't that chill your ardor?"

"Certainly not," he replied. "That will be fun. If he hasn't gone to bed, let's have him down here now."

"I was almost praying you'd be afraid of him," she confessed. "A wife's a failure if she can't discover some secret weakness in her husband. How am I going to manage you?"

"You're not!" he assured her with gay confidence, "though I have as many points of weakness as the porcupine has quills. But fear doesn't happen to be one of them. Why should I be afraid of your father?"

"Everyone's a little afraid of father," she answered, "except me. And I am too, once in a while; but I never let him know it, and six days in the week, he obeys me beautifully. I think he's just about as much afraid of me as I am of him. Anyhow, since you're a hero, without any trace of cowardice, I'll send for

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him and whisper in his ear that he shall storm at you."

John caught her by the shoulder and made a gentle pretense at shaking her. "If he storms at me some of the tempest will drench you, my lady. You forget you and I row in the same boat hereafter. But your father's in a rare good humor with me. He telephoned me to-day to tell me so."

"Father's humors—good and bad—don't always last till bed time," she warned him mockingly. "You'd better press an agonized kiss of parting on my lips! In an hour I may be torn from your longing arms forever."

If his kiss was not altogether rapturous, it was because of emotions she did not guess, and his calm, almost insolent, belief in his ability to take care of himself and of her, too, filled her with secret thrills of happiness and admiration for this strong young conqueror, who nevertheless, wanted and needed her.

Daniel Cameron came into the drawing-room promptly after the man-servant had brought him word of Mr. Howard's desire to speak to him before leaving. He was a man built on massive lines,—heavy, but tall enough not to seem unwieldy. His eyes were shaded by thick, gray brows, which gave him an expression of fierceness whenever his face was in repose. He knew this look had a business value, and did

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nothing to minimize its effect. It had often occurred to John that had this man lived in the seventeenth century, instead of at the end of the nineteenth, he would have been a bold buccaneer, and a highly successful one at that—over-bearing, ruthless, and with no burdensome delicacies.

“Well, young man,” was Cameron’s greeting, as he held out his hand,—partly in welcome and partly in congratulation because of the case John Howard had won for him, “when I was your age, it was considered courteous, upon calling at a home, to ask to see the parent as well as the daughter; you trusted he would retire gracefully early in the evening.”

John smiled at him winningly, as he prepared an impertinence by way of reply. He knew perfectly well Cameron liked best those few men whom he couldn’t terrify.

“I think, Mr. Cameron,” he told him gravely, to Hilda’s intense but hidden delight, “the custom you speak of went out of vogue some twenty years ago, because the fond parent too often neglected his part of the duty. Girls, you know, have a certain charm which sometimes remains concealed from ardent swains in the presence of stern fathers.”

“You impudent young rascal,” Cameron answered, smiling good-humoredly. “You suppose because you’ve hood-winked the Court of Appeals you may say whatever you like; but I’m more important than a

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mere court. I hold the whip hand. If you say another word I don't like, I'll cut your fee in half."

His humor perhaps lacked something of good taste, but he himself found it amusing.

"You're wrong, sir," John continued, in the same even tone, while he shot a mirthful glance at Hilda, to warn her of the mine he now proposed to spring. "It's I who hold the whip hand. I've made a treaty of alliance with your own commanding officer. As for the fee, I've already collected it in advance. I'm going to run off with Hilda."

Cameron was in truth genuinely surprised. He was, as a matter of fact, delighted at his daughter's wise choice. He had not hoped for such an eminently eligible son-in-law. Of course, he was in no hurry to lose Hilda. Since her mother's death, he had rather liked to know she was somewhere around—to be petted or bullied and to wheedle things out of him, according to his mood and hers. Nevertheless, she must, of necessity, marry some day, and he had vaguely made sure it would be some young witless idler, whom he would be forced to pension, or some business associate of his own, too old to be much of a companion for his girl. But here was this Howard chap, of just about the proper age, a man who had already shown more than promise—a lawyer of real brilliancy who wouldn't want to dangle around living at his wife's expense. He could have made the fellow very useful to him even

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as a mere paid attorney ; but since he was to be his son, it would be practically giving responsibilities to a younger and more efficient self. It was almost unbelievably good that he should have taken a fancy to Hilda.

He wouldn't be easy to manage. He was a hard-headed young fellow, with a will of his own. Cameron liked him none the less because of it. He hated soft men,—or women either, for that matter. Probably, John Howard would want to drive a hard bargain about money. He was no fool. His fees were consistently large, and he would reasonably expect Hilda's dowry to be no paltry one. After all, what did it matter? He wasn't the man to waste it. He was a steady-going chap and too good a business man for dissipation. Cameron decided he wouldn't grudge them something handsome. After all, he had no other children. What else was the money for?

Not that he meant to be foolish enough to let them know how pleased he really was. Such was not his manner of dealing with people. If this thoroughly alert young man were fully aware how welcome this marriage actually was to Cameron, there might be no limit to his demands. The old financier had something Howard desired, which might be withheld if he chose. It would be prudent not to forego his advantage too easily.

Therefore, he scowled angrily, as he turned on

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John and Hilda, and his voice was harsh as he said: "So! You've settled it all without having done me the honor to consult me! Do you think my daughter is to be married in any such off-hand fashion—like a beggar girl from the street?"

His displeasure was cleverly enough simulated to deceive Hilda, but John, accustomed to weighing the motives of witnesses, was not blinded for an instant. It was against all probability for Hilda's father to be annoyed at this betrothal. John knew himself to be in every way a highly desirable son-in-law—at least, from the point of view of Daniel Cameron. Why should he make any objection? It was a mere petty outburst, intended to demonstrate at the very beginning how powerful he was.

With a peremptory gesture, he silenced Hilda, who was plainly about to wheedle and to plead. There should be none of that. He meant to put things promptly on a proper basis.

"My dear Mr. Cameron," he insisted suavely, "I don't understand just what you mean by consulting you. There wasn't anything to consult about. We took you into our confidence immediately after we had decided things for ourselves—or at least," he added, with his disarming smile—"after a reasonably decent interval for the exchange of such intimate thoughts as would hardly have proved interesting to you."

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"As to our marriage itself, you must see clearly how little value anyone's advice—even yours—could have for us. It will be Hilda who must put up with a husband's vagaries, and it's only fair for her to be allowed to select him without interference. But you're going to have your share of our happiness. You'll be glad to see things go well with your daughter, and for your part, you've never found it particularly difficult to get along with me. I have no doubt you'll even find me somewhat useful to you. Come now," he ended, smiling again, "you talk about the customs when you were my age. All the good old traditions constrain you to gather us in your arms—or at least as much of us as your arms will hold—and to give us a conventional blessing."

Cameron decided there was nothing to be gained by roaring at a man who wouldn't be frightened, particularly if you didn't want to alienate him too far. So he began temporizing.

"You young people take a man's breath away with your sudden decisions, and then expect him to smile and be graceful. However, if you really want him, Hilda—do you want him?" he interrupted himself by asking.

Hilda smiled demurely and nodded. "Aren't you going to say you're glad, Dad? Aren't you glad, really?"

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The old man allowed himself to be cajoled into a smile. "If you want him, and you've got him, I don't see what I *can* do but be glad. Don't you always have yqur own way?" he demanded.

"But see here, Howard," he went on, "when a girl like Hilda marries, you have experience enough to know how many things are involved beside the mere fact of her being fond of a man. There are all sorts of necessary business arrangements. If the two of you can tear yourselves apart for awhile and you'll come into my library, we'll light a pair of cigars and talk this over. If your ideas are reasonable—and I assume they are—perhaps we can manage to agree very amicably."

Hilda rose, expecting the men to leave her, but John surprised both father and daughter by announcing calmly:

"That doesn't seem necessary to me, sir. I can think of no business arrangement we cannot discuss before Hilda. I'd rather she knew clearly just what I have to say. Besides, there's no room for any debate or dissatisfaction either on your part or mine. I suppose you're thinking about something in the nature of a dowry or marriage settlement, and while it's mighty good of you, I'm sure we'll get along much better without it. I can make all the money Hilda needs—all that's good for her. It won't do her a bit of harm to go without a few of the luxuries you've strewn all around this home. The real comforts we'll have, and

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in the meantime, we'll live according to the scale of my income—not yours. Pretty soon, I'll have more money than we'll know how to spend.

“Such an arrangement will be best for all of us. Neither you nor Hilda will ever get the idea I wanted your money rather than herself. As for me, it's the only way. I wouldn't impair my self-respect, and of course, I must do nothing to jeopardize that.”

Cameron was frankly puzzled. Such haughty disregard of wealth was absolutely beyond his comprehension. Hilda was lifted out of her usual world by the spectacle of her lover's nobility and disinterestedness. Cameron was not altogether enraptured. Howard he knew to be a canny young man. It was not always a good sign when a man clung so steadfastly to his independence. He would certainly find John Howard less pliant than a member of the Cameron family ought to be.

There was, however, nothing further to be said. The young man had asked for no advice. He had merely told what he intended doing and Hilda was completely under his spell. Evidently, he must be accepted on his own terms or rejected altogether; and Cameron had no idea of rejecting him.

“Well then,” was the older man's conclusion, “you leave me nothing further to say, except that should you change your mind at any time, you can still come to me and tell me.”

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"Thanks," John replied, taking his hand, "but I shan't change my mind."

"You will, of course, refuse to accept all fees from me hereafter, since you're so proud," Cameron suggested, his heavy humor coming once more to the surface.

"Not one bit of it," John told him cheerfully, "I hope I'll do plenty of work for you, just as though I were not married to Hilda, and you may be sure I'll charge you for it exactly what it's worth."

The old man, still holding John's hand, put his left arm around his daughter, and drawing her to him, kissed her on the lips.

"Well, well," was his final word, "I suppose the three of us will manage to get along pretty well together. As for my money, if you don't want it, I'll give it to your boys."

Hilda colored, but John answered, without any sign of embarrassment, "I hope you will, sir,—some day."

Yet of the two, the thought had pierced John more vitally. He had not considered this phase. If he were to-night harming Hilda Cameron, his wrong, perhaps, would not end with his life or hers. It might be carried along the tide of countless generations. His anxieties and his doubts, stilled for the past hour or more, suddenly re-awakened, though only for an instant.

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So they stood there, these three, on the threshold of the new life opening before them.

As Daniel Cameron looked at the vigorous young man who was to be his son, he thought with exultation: "What a lieutenant he will make for me! How well he will fit into each of my plans!"

Hilda, her spirit transformed by love's magic from selfishness to altruism, from egotist to hero worshipper, was thinking to herself: "How good he is—not merely strong! and it is me whom he loves!"

While John, stifling the momentary re-awakening of his scruples, was reflecting: "What a price I'll have to pay—and maybe Hilda, too! But it couldn't be helped! One can't be good and great at the same time; and I mean to be great!"

And there was not one of the three whose thought was truth.

BOOK III

THE SPOILS OF BATTLE A. D. 1913

I

DR. DEEMING's examination of his patient had been characteristically thorough. He was accustomed to tell his students his reputation was built entirely upon minute observation, rather than on any particular degree of skill or talent. Doubtless his waiting-room was crowded with men and women. It was always crowded. That was no reason why the doctor should permit his work to be hurried. Besides, this particular patient was there by special appointment and was, in addition, a man of sufficient prominence to awaken an unusual interest even in a distinguished physician, prone to indulge the fond belief that cases were to be classified by reference to diseases rather than personality.

But John Howard, who had this morning done Dr. Deeming the honor to consult him, was more than an important man. He was a local institution—almost a national one. With all his scientific detachment, the eminent diagnostician could not be blind to the fact. When, therefore, Mr. Howard's secretary had telephoned the night before, demanding, rather than requesting, an interview, the doctor had been prompt to accede. It was something of a distinction to be brought into such intimate relationship with the eminent lawyer and financier—something to be casually but carefully

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mentioned at the next dinner of the Medical Faculty. It would sound rather well.

John Howard at forty-five, was, to all outward appearances, sufficiently robust to make one wonder why Dr. Deeming should find it necessary to devote to him more than a hurried glance. His tall figure was no less erect than it had been fifteen years before. His firm face was as alert and dominating as ever. Had it not been for his abundant white hair, contrasting in startling fashion with his youthful face and slender body, one would hardly have believed him old enough to have performed the feats of wizardry in law and commerce of which he was the hero.

This morning, however, his features showed traces of mental strain. The casual observer might have detected no excitement or anxiety in his speech or manner, but Dr. Deeming was no mere casual observer. John Howard was laboring, with all the intensity and self-control which had made him a master among men, to seem calm and unafraid.

The doctor laid his stethoscope and blood-pressure machine on the table, and motioned to his distinguished patient permission to replace the garments he had been compelled to remove.

If his prolonged study of John's chest and blood vessels had brought him to a conclusion of either good or evil omen, the doctor gave no sign. The lawyer, accustomed as he was to reading the thoughts of men,

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could not, in spite of his almost pitifully acute scrutiny, find anything in Deeming's face, but the same cheerful, thoughtful serenity with which he looked alike upon the convalescent and the dying.

"So!" he murmured cheerfully. "Now your body has told me all it knows how to say. Suppose we talk a little more about this mysterious pain of yours."

He picked up a history card from the table and ran his eye over it slowly.

"You are forty-five years old, I see, Mr. Howard, and married, but have no children."

"Yes," John interrupted, with a shade of impatience in his voice. "The history your assistant has prepared is exact. I verified it myself before I let him turn it in to you. I realize that you're a busy man—just as I am."

The doctor looked at him curiously over the top of the card he was reading.

"Yes," he drawled slowly, "but neither you nor I must allow ourselves to be hurried this morning. You've never been ill before, have you?"

"Only grippe," John answered. "I've had that twice in the past five years—rather badly last time."

"So," the doctor murmured again inscrutably, "you're more of a magnate than a lawyer, I understand; but you still try cases, don't you?"

"Yes, I am still very much of a lawyer," John said,

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"I try cases when they're important and interesting, just as other men play golf or gamble. It's the most absorbing and exciting game in the world."

"I understand," Dr. Deeming responded, smiling pleasantly at this display of human enthusiasm. "Now this pain you complain of—try to tell me just when you felt it first."

John Howard thought for a minute before he spoke. Then he replied slowly: "That's a hard question to answer. For over two months now I have had little spasms of pain, but nothing like yesterday's attack. There would come a sudden, sharp twinge in the chest—the neck—the arm, the left one—a sense of uneasiness, and it would be gone as suddenly as it came. It wasn't severe. I never paid any attention to it."

"You never consulted any physician?" Dr. Deeming asked.

"Certainly not," John responded emphatically. "I'm not a nervous man. I haven't time to coddle myself. I have no patience with men who fidget about their little pains and aches."

"Yes, of course," Deeming assented with grave attention. "Did these pains come with any noticeable regularity?"

"No," John informed him, "not if you mean at definite intervals of time. They were only regular in choosing the most inconvenient minute—at the climax

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of an argument in court, or at some critical point in a directors' meeting."

"I see," observed the doctor, nodding his head. "Now this more alarming attack of yesterday—I'd like you to tell me in detail just where you were, what you were doing and how it affected you."

The task seemed an unpleasant one to John, but he made no protest.

"It was in Annapolis, in the Court of Appeals. I had been arguing the Thorndyke will case. It was just the kind of an argument I most enjoy making, and I had managed to get into the minds of the judges the exact point of view I wanted. You can gauge the impression you're making when you've had as much experience as I have. I was feeling perfectly well and almost absurdly enthusiastic. I felt sure—I feel sure now—the case was won, and it's been a long, hard fight, with an enormous estate involved. Perhaps you've seen some notices regarding it in the newspapers."

"I have," the doctor stated laconically, and John went on with his story.

"Just at the end of my argument, it occurred to me that a touch of passion—restrained, of course, but emphasizing the human element of the family quarrel—would be helpful. It would be an effective climax. I worked myself into the proper mood and finished the speech with as much excitement as seemed to me to be

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effective in an appellate court. At the very highest point, I brought my speech to a sudden end. Just at this instant, the pain came. I never felt anything as excruciating. It seemed as though my heart were being squeezed mercilessly in a vise; I thought I was going to die. I believed then it had lasted an eternity, but it couldn't have been more than a minute or two, because when it was over, I noticed the judges were still collecting their papers. They hadn't had time to leave the bench. In the confusion of the court's adjournment, no one noticed me but my young assistant. I didn't call for help. I don't know just why. It was not because I would have been ashamed. I was in too much pain to think of anything like that. This young man saw I had fallen back into my chair, rather than seated myself. He brought me water and asked what he could do for me."

"And then?" the doctor prompted, as John paused.

"Then I had sense enough to tell him I felt slightly indisposed, but that he should make no scene. I didn't want it spread over the newspaper headlines. Even if I didn't hate such things anyhow, it might have affected the market value of some of my securities. I sat quietly where I was for a few minutes, trying to pull myself together. I suppose I looked badly shaken. Young Iverson says I did. A few people tried to congratulate me on my argument. Iverson managed to shunt them off, and he helped me into my motor. It

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was waiting for me at the curb. I had been driven down to Annapolis, instead of coming in the train. Iverson told the chauffeur to drive back to Baltimore very slowly and we were over two hours making the trip. I was utterly limp."

"When you got home, you were better?" Dr. Deeming asked.

"Yes. Then I had my secretary call you, and that's all." John scrutinized the physician sharply as he awaited some verdict.

The doctor drummed softly with his fingers on his desk before reaching for a pad of prescription blanks. His pen travelled awkwardly over the paper for what seemed to John an unwarranted length of time. The lawyer interrupted impatiently.

"Well, Doctor, what do you make of it?"

The physician permitted his expression to show a slight displeasure. He was not accustomed to being forced to stand and deliver an opinion. He was about to prescribe, to tell his patient what he must do and refrain from doing! For a layman that should have been sufficient. Of what use could it be to name a disease to a man whose only business was to follow the advice he was about to receive? But then he remembered the unusual character of John Howard, and he smiled the exasperating smile of professional tolerance.

"Mr. Howard," he said, "you've spent over twenty years forcing men and things to do exactly

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what you've planned. And you've succeeded at your work wonderfully well. But you forgot that when you were born, Nature put that mind of yours into a poor human body—just like other men's. You've got to give it some consideration. It's crying out for a long rest."

"What do you mean by a long rest?" John demanded in the manner of the experienced cross-examiner.

"I mean," Deeming replied, with a discomfort which did not escape the questioner, "you must spend to-day closing all your business affairs. To-morrow you must be completely out of touch with your work. You must try no cases. You must let others direct the policies of your corporations. There must be absolutely no mental strain or excitement—not much physical exertion, either. I'll give you a prescription and a diet list—or better still, I'll telephone Mrs. Howard. Shall I find her at home during the day?"

"You will not," John rapped out peremptorily. "You'll have to talk to me. My wife's at Palm Beach."

"Oh!" Deeming exclaimed, "that's wonderfully opportune! You can join her there at once. I'll dictate a letter to her at lunch time, giving her full directions for taking care of you. I find it's always better to deal with the real head of the family. I'm a married man myself."

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His witticism fell absolutely flat against the wall of John's pale, resolute insistence:

"Do me the favor, Doctor, not to communicate with my wife. I prefer that she should not be troubled. I desire to control the situation myself. Let us suppose I follow your advice faithfully—devote to it all the energy and attention I would give to any other important matter. When can I go back to work?"

"Now, Mr. Howard," Dr. Deeming protested suavely, "surely you can see what an unfair question you put. How can I foretell the progress of your improvement? It is now January. Come back to me when the season ends at Palm Beach, and I'll go over you again. The first day you're ready for work, I'll tell you so."

The physician turned to complete the prescription and the diet list. He seemed to believe the consultation was approaching its end; but John Howard did not rise. He settled himself firmly in his chair and began talking in that quiet, masterful tone of his own, which had never failed to arrest attention.

"Doctor, I don't know who was the last man seated in this chair where I am now, but I do know you'll have to treat me after another fashion than sufficed for him. I am a different sort of man. I've had a different training. I'm not to be put off with pretty phrases. It's been my business to learn how men think.

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I've questioned many medical witnesses, and at this minute I've a good working idea of your mental processes. You're a kind man. You hate to tell people unpleasant truths. That's not always the wisest way to handle men—anyhow, not men like me. I want you to talk to me as though I were a physician like yourself."

"But you're not a physician, sir," Deeming objected, vigorously, but still deferentially. "Undoubtedly, you have picked up some knowledge of medical phrases, but if I talked to you as one physician to another, you'd receive false and exaggerated impressions—impressions which could only result in your own morbid discomfort."

"Then you're willing to admit I'd have some ground for alarm if I knew what was the matter with me?" John shot back at him, with a mirthless smile.

Deeming became aware of having blundered into the lawyer's trap. His manner showed some confusion, as he cast about rather helplessly for a soothing explanation; but John Howard came to his rescue before he had fully collected his thoughts.

"Don't trouble yourself to manufacture an evasion, Doctor," he advised, wearily. "You've told me all I need to know."

"Now, my dear sir," Deeming began, "you must not assume——"

"Nor should you assume," broke in the patient,

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“ that a man like myself would come to such an interview as this, totally unprepared to discover the answer to a simple question, capable of being satisfied in two words, but involving everything in the world to himself. I was prepared, and I am answered. You will believe me to be perfectly aware of my malady when I tell you the prescription you are now writing calls for little glass capsules filled with *amyl nitrite*. You will order me, when I feel the slightest indication of an approaching attack, to crush one and inhale its contents. That’s to be my profession for the brief time still before me. When I leave your office, you will mark on your history blank the diagnosis ‘*Angina Pectoris*’ and the prognosis ‘*Hopeless.*’ ”

Deeming was completely silenced for a minute by this unusual invalid. Most of his patients lent themselves more than willingly to schemes intended to buoy up their hopes—no matter how ill-founded; but this strange creature seemed to find a perverted delight in wringing from him the last drop of absolute truth and was, in the bargain, too keen-witted to be deceived. The physician was driven to take refuge in telling the simple facts.

“ Mr. Howard,” he informed him, “ sometimes it doesn’t make for happiness to want to know all your doctor knows, and to be clever enough to wrench from him the things he meant to spare you. But you chose for yourself. You would know the truth, and now

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you know it; but you're wrong in assuming you have nothing to look forward toward except death. One may have angina and live many peaceful years, provided, always, he can bring himself to follow intelligent advice. You can arrange your mode of living so as to avoid all exciting elements. You need not deny yourself any quiet pleasures. Thousands of men have journeyed along fairly comfortably with angina as a travelling companion. You're something of a student. Perhaps you've heard of the famous surgeon, John Hunter? He had it, but lived usefully to a ripe old age."

John smiled sardonically. "You've chosen a bad example, Doctor," he observed. "Wasn't Hunter the man who said his life was at the mercy of any rascal who chose to tease or vex him? He died, I believe, because he indulged himself in a long-deferred sensation of anger."

Deeming bit his lips. This man knew too much to be amenable to the conventional modes of comfort. Well then, he'd simply have to be left to his own resources. There was nothing else to be said apparently. John Howard, however, thought of another question to ask.

"You spoke of Hunter," he said; "he managed to do his work and still keep alive. Why can't I go on with mine?"

Deeming's dissent was emphatic. "If your work

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were one of dull routine, or if you were a phlegmatic man, I'd let you do it; but your matters are exciting—thrilling sometimes—and you, yourself, a bundle of nerves. You think you haven't any, because you're not fidgety. As a matter of fact, your nervous system is exquisitely sensitive. You've simply been schooling yourself in repression. You've been living on your nerves. If you go into court or fight financial battles at directors' meetings, you're almost mathematically certain to have these heart spasms. Leaving out of the question the risk to your life, you remember yesterday's pain too well to want another attack."

"Well then," John summed up the matter, "you want me to eat and drink in accordance with your list; to do no business of any kind; to avoid all excitement, physical and mental, and to report to you in a few months."

"Yes," Deeming assented. "You'd better put yourself in the hands of some doctor at Palm Beach. Corning is a good man. Tell him I sent you."

"May I motor?" John inquired.

"Certainly, unless you are afflicted with speed mania. And you may also walk short distances and devote yourself generally to all sane and reasonable amusements. You needn't behave as though you were a helpless invalid. I wouldn't smoke, though, if I were you—unless you find it makes you genuinely un-

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comfortable to deprive yourself. Then try to get along on one or two mild cigars each day."

"I understand perfectly," John said, letting a hint of bitterness steal into his voice. "By refraining absolutely from all forms of living, you think I may keep alive till some more vigorous spasm makes its appearance."

The doctor felt he would be false to his position as a deputy lieutenant of Divine Providence if he failed to speak a word showing his approval of the simple beauties of resignation and patient content.

"Mr. Howard," he exhorted, "when you get over the first shock of this misfortune, if you'll permit me to say it, you'll be a little ashamed of being so rebellious. Suppose you were a poor man, who couldn't stop work. You'd be facing certain death; or imagine yourself compelled to live without any of the comforts you're accustomed to enjoy! Your position is unusually fortunate. You're a man of enormous wealth. You may continue to give yourself and your family every luxury, with no fear of financial disaster. You've accomplished more work than most men could crowd into a century. Your ambitions are, therefore, satisfied. You have a remarkable mind which you can now quietly devote to the best part of living—to contemplation and to study."

"Study?" John repeated, as though he really could not comprehend the other's thought. "What could be

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the purpose of my studies, when you forbid me to put to use anything I might learn?"

The scientist found it equally hard to grasp the point of view of the man of affairs. "That's not why men should study!" he argued. "One studies for the love of knowledge itself—for the sheer joy of discovering a truth men never knew before." The master of research was stating his creed. In his enthusiasm, he almost forgot the problem of his patient's broken human life.

"Your mode of thought is not mine," John stated coldly. "I didn't mean to whine to you. I suppose you pass death sentences every morning. One more question, and I'll get out of your way. I assume there's no one, either here or abroad, who knows any more than you about curing this incurable disease, is there?"

Deeming hesitated. A trip to Germany on a journey of hope, however fantastic, might be the most desirable prescription for this restless man, so loath to turn aside from his all-absorbing activities.

But John Howard read his half-formed purpose. "For God's sake, Doctor, don't lie to me because you want to keep me amused. It's more important for me to know the truth than to enjoy it. There's no one, is there?"

"No," Deeming conceded, reluctantly. "If there were anything of value discovered in the treatment of

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angina, I'd know it promptly. I'd send for you at once."

"And I suppose, also," John continued, "it would be useless to set some of your promising young men at the Johns Hopkins to do research work on the problem? The cost wouldn't matter."

The seasoned physician found something very pitiful in the quiet, but hopeless, insistence of this man, for the first time facing a force he could not bend to his will. He answered him with all gentleness, but with no more fruitless lies.

"No," was his verdict, "you see, angina is not really a disease. It's a symptom. The biggest and most important arteries in your body are in bad shape. We shall never learn to make men over. I'm sorry; I'd be glad to hold out to you bits of hope like this, but you won't have it."

"No," the lawyer answered, "I've never in my lifetime found any comfort in cheating myself. At the end, I don't want to change. Give me my prescription, and I'll go."

When the doctor had finished writing John arose and extended his hand in farewell. His cheeks were white, but his voice was steady, and he was completely master of himself.

"Good-bye, Doctor," he said, "I'll give your advice and your little sermon my earnest thought." He even managed to assume a pale reflection of the winning

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smile so many newspaper men had found a welcome asset in describing him. "Apparently, I'll have plenty of time to meditate on your preachment."

The effort at mockery passed from his speech, and he added very sincerely, "I'm genuinely grateful to you, none the less because your news is so unpalatable. That's not your fault. Good bye!"

A minute later, he was descending the steps into the midst of the traffic on Charles Street. He walked slowly, and as though somewhat bewildered, as he crossed the pavement to his waiting limousine. But he held himself rigidly erect and his stare was more haughty than ever before. He was not going to be weak—not going to make a pathetic spectacle of himself before these people whose commercial life he had been able to sway, only yesterday.

The chauffeur sprang from his seat and attempted to assist him into the machine. John loftily waved him aside.

"Where shall I drive, sir?" the man asked, when his master had been seated.

"To the office," John bade. It was the familiar command, given in the same voice he had used so many times in the past. He was still John Howard. Neither man nor Fate had been able to change him.

Then there broke upon him the sudden realization of where he had been and what he had learned there.

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His hand stole furtively to his vest pocket and drew forth the ominous prescription. His chauffeur started at the unfamiliar, slightly querulous pitch in John's voice, as he added, almost as though some apology were necessary:

"I forgot, Thomas; first you must drive me to a drug store."

II

THE offices of Howard & Chase, where John made his appearance a short time after Dr. Deeming had dismissed him, were very different from those they had occupied fifteen years before. They embraced an entire upper floor of one of the city's tallest buildings, and were flooded with light and air. At one end of the suite, through a half open door, a glimpse of a pretentious library could be obtained. Many offices and consultation rooms opened into a large busy lobby, where clerks and messengers were rapidly passing to and fro. The furnishings, in spite of their austerity, were selected with a taste and an eye for effect not usually to be found in the business world. It seemed as though there had been a definite intention to make the rooms as attractive in appearance as they could possibly be, without in the least degree restricting their usefulness as law offices. John hurried through this lobby, nodding in hasty acknowledgment of the greetings of his employees. His own room was in a corner of the suite, an ample, sunny room, with enormous windows. John had selected its location and planned its appearance largely because of the view it afforded of the city. He would never have admitted the fact to his most intimate associate, but he found nothing so stimulating to his imagination as the sudden, swift glance he would

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cast from time to time at this Baltimore, lying at his feet. It visualized for him the prize he had fought with such grim courage and endurance to win, the power he had at last firmly grasped. It was almost a ritual with this stern, unyielding worshipper of strength, each morning, when he entered his office, to gaze for a minute at the city—his city, teeming with life, energy and industry—much of which he, himself, had set in motion, and all of which he could influence for good or evil if he chose—turning its current to the left or to the right, speeding its flow, or damming it as should seem to him wise and proper. Again at night—sometimes it was very late at night when John left his office—it was his custom to switch off his electric lamps and stand for an instant at his window, while the myriad lights below him kindled a reflected glow in his own soul. Beneath him there were homes full of the quiet happiness and content so good for the average type of men and women. Elsewhere, there were pleasant buildings, where innocent amusement was to be found; a vessel, with its gleaming radiance, would glide slowly from her slip on her way down to the sea, and far away, on the edge of the picture, he would note the swift rush of a long railroad train, seeming, with its brilliantly lighted cars, like a magic serpent of fire.

In all these enterprises, the homes, the theatres, the steamships, the railroads, he was playing his part—

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a dominant part. There was no man in all these hundreds of thousands who could truly say that in some way or other his life had not been swayed by John Howard—even though the financier's name was not known to him. As John looked each morning and night at the fruits of his work, felt the spell of the city's beauty, and heard the hum of its industries, it never failed to thrill him. He would turn from it with a great upward surge of emotion, which the faithful find only in prayer.

This morning, however, he seated himself dismally at his desk and picked up the long engagement sheet which he always found awaiting his arrival. It was to have been a busy day; there were no cases marked for trial on his calendar, but one consultation after another had been arranged for him. He smiled sardonically as he recalled the plans he had intended to enforce upon each of the men whose names were written here. Of what use were they to him now? Or he to them, for that matter? He rang impatiently for the office manager, and when he came, held the sheet out to him peremptorily.

"Mr. Cline," he directed, "I shall not keep any of to-day's appointments. Have each person on my list telephoned to that effect."

The clerk raised his eyebrows slightly. There were important names on that list, but he had been taught

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long before, the wisdom of advising Mr. Chase and obeying Mr. Howard.

This time, however, he permitted himself the liberty of inquiring rather pointedly, "Shall I give any reason, sir? The Directors of the Enterprise Company had arranged for this appointment over a week ago."

"No," John ordered, "no reasons! Simply say I found it impossible to meet them. Then telephone Berg & Co., my brokers. I want Mr. Berg to come here as speedily as possible. Is Mr. Chase in his room?"

"No, sir," Cline informed him, "he hasn't come in yet. His earliest engagement is for eleven o'clock."

"I want him to come in here as soon as he reaches the office," John commanded, "even if it forces him to break his appointment. It's important; tell him so. With the exception of Mr. Berg and Mr. Chase, I wish to see absolutely no one. You will please make sure I am not disturbed."

"Yes sir," Cline murmured obediently, and left the room.

It was an odd experience to John Howard, halted suddenly in the midst of his breathless orbit of life, to find himself suddenly without any work worth the doing. There were hundreds of odds and ends to which he might have applied himself. But what was the use? Someone else might try laboriously and slowly to knit together the loose threads he could

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have managed easily and quickly. What did it matter if it were done well or ill? His part in all these complex schemes, infinitely important yesterday—infinitesimally trivial this morning—was over. Other men, smaller men, would take up his work. They would do it without his skill, without his breadth of vision. There was no one really fit to take his place. There were many things which would go rather badly without his guiding hand. There would be some men who would be glad he was out of the way—not that his absence would be of genuine benefit to them. They would fall to squabbling among themselves, each striving to pick up some little fragment of his dead power, like the miserable vultures they were. It was really distressing, John told himself, altogether aside from his own part in the calamity. It was absurdly illogical, —purposeless,—that a man like himself, impossible to replace in financial circles, should be snatched from his post in this heedless fashion. It would be a tremendous loss to the city.

He turned to the window for a view of the city; for the last time he should see it as a creature of his own destiny. When he left that room, he would be merely one of the tiny creatures who could be seen down there, a dot of black, slowly moving along the ribbon he knew to be a wide street. He would be powerless thereafter to change—to direct—any of their lives. His great day would be over. What matter

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whether or not he dragged out a few impotent years of merely vegetable existence? His real death was now—now when he ceased to be the only John Howard he could conceive of,—the man of authority, who knew how to deal with his city. He looked long and sadly down from his window, almost fancying he could hear in the faint sounds that rose from the street the sad voices of farewell.

The Baltimore John now looked down upon in his silent misery had changed, with the passing of the years, far more than John himself had done. The low, unpretentious, but pleasant sky-line of fifteen years before had given place to irregular outlines of lofty buildings and tall, slender smoke-stacks. Quiet little nooks and corners in the quaint old quarters of the town were now replaced by busy hives of orderly brick and steel, where men and women, ranged in monotonous ranks at clattering machines, turned out, in enormous quantities, products as empty of individuality as their own working lives.

Away off in the residential section could be seen the bulk of the huge apartment houses and hotels, which had arrogantly elbowed out of the way rows of little red brick houses, each set behind a comfortable shade tree. In the foreground, one might look down on the great white court-house—now no longer new,—already beginning to acquire a certain tradition of its own—a new tradition, not so much intolerant of

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the old, as utterly heedless of it. The men who to-day hurried in and out of its bronze doors were men of business (if only on a tiny scale), far more than they were students or scientists. The judges who listened to the arguments of these men of affairs took a just pride in their practical sagacity and business insight, as well as in the factory-like speed with which cases were disposed of and court dockets cleared. A new order had come to all the city. It was the era of the great god, Efficiency.

The new régime had been built upon the spaces left empty when the crumbling fragments of an old-world-charm had been swept away, just as the structures themselves were built upon the spaces laid bare by the Great Fire of nine years before. But here and there, in the midst of this new and greater city, there still remained some souvenir of a former day of graceful, inefficient charm, which the fire itself had not found the heart to destroy. In the same way, even in the daily life of its industry and thought, similar in a thousand ways to those of any other American city, one may also, to his intense astonishment, chance every now and then on a phrase, an idea, or an episode, which tells him he is still in that Baltimore, which in another and earlier day, sent forth clipper ships to bring back to her lovely daughters the silks and perfumes of India.

All the changes of the past score of years John

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Howard had seen. Many of them he, himself, had helped to cause. In spite of his almost religious feeling for the city, he had given practically no thought at all to such a subtle thing as the spirit which lies behind the activities of a town or of a nation. He was concerned entirely with concrete things. Why a nation wanted to grow bigger—more efficient—wealthier; for what purpose men wore out their lives in factories and market places—these things were not worth discussion. They were axiomatic; such was the nature of Man. John assumed the full usefulness of these desires, and believed the greatest single factor in his amazing success had been his ability to typify the spirit of this period, which he and his mates called an era of industrial progress.

That his success had been amazing, he never doubted. What else could success mean? He had, when a mere boy, devoted himself to the accomplishment of certain definite ambitions. Had he spoken of them in detail to any man familiar with the world of affairs, he would have been mercilessly ridiculed, so extravagant did his demands seem at that time. Even had he not been a stripling, without money or influential friends, his dreams would have seemed absurd. He not only intended to be a distinguished lawyer, with a clientèle of his own selection (other men, though rarely, had succeeded there), but he insisted as a successful lawyer, and without abandoning the rôle, he

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would be a prominent figure in the financial life of his community. He could not be made to see why a lawyer should not control banks and public utilities as logically as the man whose wealth had been acquired in dry-goods or brokerage. And his theories had met the test of time.

His long upward climb had been a series of the most carefully planned manœuvres, sometimes demanding the most delicate skill, the most trying patience and self-control. But there had never been an hour when he had doubted his ultimate triumph and his progress had possessed all the attributes of an inevitable mathematical demonstration.

His father-in-law, Daniel Cameron, had been even more useful to him than he had dared to hope—not consciously, but because John knew how to employ the force of a strong name. He had not been able to utilize this welcome help without the exercise of much tact. There came a time when it suddenly dawned upon the testy old gentleman that he, and not his daughter's husband, was the second in command in their joint undertakings. The revelation was not a source of happiness. John felt he had been genuinely considerate of Cameron's feelings. He had made it a practice often to ask his advice, though he rarely took it. He entrusted to Cameron matters of apparent importance, but in reality molded into a form where no seriously injurious results could occur, no matter

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what was done. He would then allow his father-in-law to debate gravely what steps should be taken, yield to his views, after much discussion, and let him put his ideas into effect.

Another man, so circumstanced, might have tossed aside his worn-out ally less ceremoniously. It was characteristic of John to be as deferential and as charming as he could, without in any way allowing his plans to be hampered. The old gentleman had served him well, even if he had not intended doing so. John was still reaping, and would continue to reap, the benefit of their relationship. It was only fair to expend some effort in making him comfortable, and he was made fairly happy. He even grew to feel a certain pride and importance in being the father-in-law of this brilliant young dictator. Hilda felt keenly the element of grotesque pathos in the eagerness of her father to gather to himself this reflected glory, remembering as she did how he had once lorded it over the financial clique, where his sole importance was now found in the family tie binding him to its new monarch.

The idea probably never occurred to John. He knew he was kind to the old gentleman. He was sure he had been a good son to him, and that Cameron was fond of him. That was enough. His kindness grew more marked as the old man grew feebler and had less claim on him. That was John's way. When Daniel Cameron had died, about eight years after his daugh-

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ter's marriage, he was probably more attached to John than to Hilda. Certainly he had, toward the last, relied upon him more constantly and made more demands upon his time and companionship. John did not grudge these services. They emphasized in his own sight the distance he had travelled in his pursuit of success, and besides, he felt such conduct on his part could not but seem to Hilda in the light of a graceful tribute to herself.

For he realized all too well that things were not exactly as he had hoped in his relations toward his wife. It was not easy for him to understand just why. He could think of no instance where he had failed in any duty to her. He had been a pleasant and interesting companion; he had allowed her to make inroads upon his valuable time, almost, but never beyond, the point where it might have interfered with his work; she had rarely mentioned a desire he had not promptly and delicately fulfilled; he had never done anything, at any time, which could have caused her anxiety or grief. He had, early in their married life, explained to her many of his intricate matters of business, and had been delighted at her quick and intelligent comprehension. Nor had he swayed from the resolution of their betrothal night to accept no money either from her or her father. What then could be her cause for complaint against him? He could not tell; but he did know, in the months immediately fol-

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lowing their marriage, the passionate enthusiasm she had displayed in her love for him diminished before his very eyes, and died. She was an exemplary wife. She was a charming and highly useful hostess to a husband who understood the commercial values of intelligent hospitality. She was an attractive companion. There was no doubt she still admired vastly and understandingly her husband's genius; but she gave few evidences of any real affection. Her conversations drifted back to the style of somewhat strained, but interesting, cleverness she had affected before marriage. She was always ready with a retort, containing at least enough of wit to arrest John's attention. She never refused to listen to his stories of the details of his work, and though she usually understood them as most women would not have done, and commented on them thoughtfully, she never seemed hungry for more. She seemed to accept both life and John as matters of routine—not unpleasant—but not exciting either, and not worthy of any degree of exertion.

It was patent to John that she did not really love him, and the knowledge piqued his vanity and gave him a constant sense of discomfort. He recognized frankly his own inability to love her, but could not understand why this fact so vitally affected the situation. Whether he loved her or not, he was giving her as much of both psychic and material things as the most adoring of husbands could have given her.

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He had made studied and prolonged attempts to give her the most precious of all things,—his own intimate companionship,—and she most politely, but none the less clearly, evidenced a preference for a commonplace matter-of-fact relation of daily good fellowship.

If she had only made complaints and reproaches, given him an opportunity to discuss with her their points of mal-adjustment, it seemed to him they might have arrived at some better understanding. But she made no response to his efforts toward that end. She taught herself to suppress all evidence of her former imperious outbursts of temper. He always found her considerate, merry and behind it all, unapproachably distant.

She must have discovered, he decided, in the mysterious manner women possess, his lack of what she termed love, and this was the result. Of course, she had, perhaps, some ground for disappointment, but it seemed to him she displayed a feminine lack of proportion. Women laid all the stress on an emotion and none on its effect! She wanted love and she had not found it. But what did she expect love to give her? What else, except shelter, protection from all harm, an intimate companionship of hearth and of mind and the miracle of a renewal of life in children? All these he could give, and give in a way few other men could have done. Yet she accepted some of the boons

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half-heartedly, and rejected others altogether, because, forsooth, there was something lacking in the attitude of the donor! It was absurd.

Her rejection of children was obdurate and it had been a sore point between them—one of the few instances in their subtle lack of harmony which could be definitely noted and remembered. In the first happy glow of their marriage, Hilda had been passionately desirous to become the mother of a son, a child who should be at once hers, and yet carry into the next generation his father's wonderful strength and resolution. It had been John who had then urged and enforced delay. He was at that time striving with all his ingenuity to gain points of vantage in those commercial enterprises which seemed to him destined to become powerful. This policy meant the investment of a huge proportion of his earnings, and during that time he was in no mood to take any step which might add, even in a small degree, to his personal expenses. He explained this necessity of economy to Hilda patiently, and in much detail. She could not be brought to accept his point of view. There was the colossal fund of her father's money. She had only to ask and receive whatever she might require. John, however, was stubborn. He had determined to accept no money from his father-in-law, and didn't mean to surrender his position of absolute self-reliance. There was no haste. There would be plenty of time for children.

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But when the time came, as it speedily did, that John's income was so vast as to make the necessity for economy of any kind utterly ridiculous, Hilda's attitude toward John had undergone a change. He waited for many months in silence, hoping she would once more refer to her former desire, but she studiously avoided the subject. Then he so far stooped from his dignity as to urge it upon her—even to plead with her. But on this one question Hilda, who had learned to meet his less important wishes with such flexibility, was adamant. She would not even allow him to debate the matter with her. He never knew exactly what had induced this complete reversal of sentiment. She would simply state flatly she would bear him no child, and had no desire to talk about it. He was deeply wounded at the time, and still nursed a smouldering sense of injury. For as his success became more and more sure, his desire to extend his dominion beyond the span of his own life grew to be almost an obsession—all the more gripping as he fully realized he was destined to disappointment. He wanted to found a dynasty. He had hoped there might be a long succession of Howards to inherit and administer in his own large manner the fortune and the power he was so rapidly accumulating. Such had been the history of the Vanderbilts and the Goulds and many other families founded by strong men, who had lived to teach strong sons to receive and hold the authority

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of their fathers. Why was he to be deprived of this privilege, the crown and culmination of all earthly success? And Hilda had denied it to him summarily, without giving him a hearing—perhaps because of some womanish whim about the absence of a perfect love! He found it indeed hard to forgive.

It was this one subject, more than any other, which made his reflections this morning so bitter. How futile everything was! He had worked as few men had ever done before. He had been the bond-servant of an idea; he had seen this idea transformed from fancy into fact, at the price of everything men term joyous living. He had been content to be anxious, weary and lonely—no one could know how lonely!—in order that he might possess power. He had gained his object and used it wisely, he told himself, for over ten years, never knowing rest, always struggling to maintain his dominance, and to make it less unstable. Now he had reached the end. For what had he been battling all these long years? What trophies of his campaigns could he take with him down into the darkness of the grave? The men who had suffered privation to devote themselves to some art or science—men at whom he had secretly scoffed—would leave at least a book, a study, or a machine as the fruit of their short day on earth. The common, worthless clod bequeathed his place to his child and took farewell of his many friends; but he, John Howard, the master

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of them all, would pass into nothingness without one tangible monument of his existence. His work other men would speedily undo. He had no child. He had no true friends. He left no book or record of his thoughts. He had no thoughts which seemed to him worthy of being put into a book. His ideas were merely personal devices for accomplishing definite commercial manipulations. He had invented nothing. He would leave merely a shadowy tradition and a huge pile of dollars to be given to Hilda, whose inheritance from her father would have been more than ample, without any aid from him. The worst of it was that his sudden call from the ranks had not really modified his condition. If he had lived out his three score years and ten, he must, nevertheless, have faced this same sense of futility and mockery at the end. Still, as he sat at his desk, tasting the bitterness of death, he knew with absolute certainty that if a reprieve could be given him—if he might suddenly awake and realize his fatal malady to have been a horrible realistic nightmare, he would smile tolerantly at the misery of his dream, ring for a stenographer, and plunge without delay into the struggle which must ultimately lead him again to the blankness and disillusion of this very minute.

He was born to fight for something. An inexorable fate had driven him on; he had been so made, whether he willed it or not; he would do it all over

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again—worthless as it was, if he only had a chance; and there was nothing in all the world he would not have given for that chance to do vigorously, and with his whole life force, what he had now learned was not worth doing! Men were curious bundles of purposeless energy and witless inconsistency—even himself.

He must shake off this mood of useless repining and vain longing. He must arrange the details of his abdication. There was much to be done, and it must be managed with decency and dispatch. Even now the chief assistant in this sombre ceremony was at his door. Mr. Berg, the broker, a short, shrivelled man of well over middle age, was ushered into the room and awaited orders. They came with no hesitation or apparent emotion.

“Mr. Berg,” John explained, “you have, of course, a list of all my investments. Two lists, in fact, one of which you remember is marked ‘Speculative Securities,’ the other, ‘Investment Securities.’”

The broker bowed deferentially. John’s account had been a most profitable one. He indulged the hope of **much** more profit in the future.

“I want you,” John continued, “as speedily as you can do so without unsettling the market, to sell for the best prices you can obtain every security on the speculative list. With the proceeds you will buy more bonds of every description now on the invest-

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ment list, in the proportions of my present holdings. You grasp my meaning?"

Berg's eyes bulged with astonishment. "You mean you're going to part with your stock control in——?"

"I mean just that," John interrupted quietly. "I shall hold no more stock in any of these enterprises. Of course, as you always have, you will keep my confidence. Don't unsettle the market more than you have to. You might work through other brokers if you find it necessary. I'm going to retire."

"I am sorry to hear it, sir," Berg said with unaffected simplicity. "I'll get you the best prices I can, but won't Mr. Chase want to take over any of your holdings?"

"No," John decided, marking out quickly, as he always had done in the past, Arthur Chase's path for him. "When I'm here no longer, this office will cease to deal in finance. It will devote itself exclusively to law."

John nodded in evidence of dismissal and Berg rose to go. He hesitated a minute and then ventured:

"I hope you're retiring, Mr. Howard, only because you've made all the money you can possibly want. I trust you're not ill."

He could not tell from John's piercing glance whether he was angry at his presumption or not; but when the reply came, it was kindly enough.

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"Your hope is misplaced. I'm quitting because I'm not well. That also is part of a professional confidence."

"I'm sorry," Berg murmured, and stood silent, apparently at a loss for something appropriate to add.

"I'm sorrier still," John answered, with an effort at pleasantry. "I have greater cause to be. I find it's more troublesome to deal with doctors than with brokers. I'll make arrangements during the day for turning my stocks over to you, endorsed. You may hold the bonds you buy, subject to my orders, until you hear from me."

"If I need to communicate with you, Mr. Howard, shall I telephone you here?" Berg inquired, his hand on the door-knob.

"No; what will you want with me?" John demanded sharply. "You have your orders. I'm not going to change my mind, if that's what you're afraid of."

"No sir," Berg apologized, "I didn't suppose you would, but there might be some question of price or——"

"Never mind bothering me about prices," John commanded, "you have complete discretion. I'm not coming to the office after to-day. I'm probably going out of town."

Berg bowed and took himself away, and the scene was over.

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John felt he had gone through it rather well, considering all it meant to him. He had abdicated. He could no longer enforce his will on any of the industries in the city which lay stretched out before his window. He was a simple, hopeless, broken creature. He had done his work and life was through with him.

III

IT seemed to John as though an eternity went by in the few minutes during which he waited for Arthur Chase to arrive at the office. It was not mere impatience because he now found himself without occupation, after all these years of feverish haste. What troubled him most was the vision of hour after hour of restless inactivity stretched before him. He tried to busy himself with a newspaper, but tossed it aside after a hurried glance. What interest could he feel in daily happenings, which could not influence his own actions and the results of which he should not live to see? He picked up a law book, in which he had marked for study a recent decision of the Federal Supreme Court. He could not finish the first page, although the decision had modified surprisingly the existing law. Why should he follow the drift of legal opinion since he would never apply it again to the problems he had been accustomed to attack with such energy and enthusiasm?

He leaned back in his chair and idly wondered how Arthur would accept his tidings. To his amazement, it occurred to him that Arthur might be secretly relieved at his disappearance. He had been a rather hard task-master to his junior partner. The lazy, easy-going Arthur would have pottered through life with-

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out effort or result, had not John prodded him unceasingly. He had driven him to directors' meetings and conferences. He had taught him what he should say and what he should do. He had refused to permit him to arrange his working hours in the leisurely fashion he would have enjoyed if left to his own devices. On the other hand, he had watched over his welfare with the most minute care. He had invested Arthur's share of the firm's enormous earnings with the most scrupulous conservatism. He had never permitted him to have any financial hazard in the daring schemes into which he, himself, plunged with apparent recklessness. Arthur's fortune must be secure. He consulted, from time to time, with Helen, his partner's wife, and decided what proportion of Arthur's income must be applied to investment and what might properly be devoted to his somewhat ostentatiously extravagant mode of living. It was he who decided to what schools Arthur's children should be sent, and what colleges they should be prepared to enter. When they became involved in childish scrapes, it was John who invariably came to the rescue. If any man had thus assumed control of his life, John realized at this moment, he would have found him intolerable; but Arthur needed someone to steer his course for him, and John had done it well. He had made a rich man of him. He would never have amounted to anything if left to his own resources. John had found him from first to last

a heavy burden. Still, in this hour, when the entire fabric of his life's edifice was crumbling before his eyes, he found himself longing illogically for Arthur's coming—hoping fervently he would be truly sorry at the inevitable parting. He recognized the curious quality of his frame of mind. He, the strong man, was fixing his hopes upon the creature of recognized weakness; he who had prided himself on a complete freedom from sentimentality was suffering real suspense, lest his inferior might feel no emotion of sorrow at his passing. But Arthur to him now represented the last tangible hold he retained on his routine of living. If Arthur were relieved at his emancipation from John's iron control, then he might be sure that in his downfall, as in his dominance, he stood utterly alone—outside of the pale of human fellowship.

When Arthur bustled into John's office, unaware of the crisis which had been encountered in his absence, he was full of contrition and apology for his tardiness. The Arthur Chase of this day was undeniably fat and middle-aged. The haste of the past few minutes had made his breathing labored and his speech jerky. He was a picture of comfortable good humor and lack of dignity.

"Morning, John!" he puffed. "Say, I'm mighty sorry if I held you up. I sort of overslept this morning. Theatre—last night, you know. Supper after-

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ward,—I'm getting too old for that sort of thing, I suppose. I'm pretty late, I know."

His eagerness to excuse his delay to his mentor chimed in all too aptly with John's reflections about his partner's subjection. What man well over forty, and a millionaire in the bargain, would not be glad to be rid of a master who had taught him to stammer out pleas for forgiveness, like a school-boy coming late to his classes?

"It doesn't matter," John remarked, with a kindness which caused Arthur to look at him with astonishment. The senior partner had been striving for twenty years to force the junior to meet his appointments with punctuality.

"I met Judge Bowen at the play last night," Arthur announced, getting his breath once more. "He'd come up from Annapolis. He was full of enthusiasm about your argument in the Thorndyke case. He said it was wonderful. I reckon you've won it."

"Yes," John assented listlessly. "I'm sure we will get a decision. That's not what I wanted to talk to you about."

Arthur did want to talk of it, however; it was an agreeable subject. He had no doubt John's theme would involve something new and troublesome. He was such a restless creature—never content to pause and enjoy a victory.

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"But there'll be a whooping big fee in it, won't there?"

"Yes, you old spendthrift; can't you think of anything but money?" John answered, with a smile of tolerance so wistful, that even the unobservant Arthur noticed its unusual sweetness and the drawn lines of the face it lighted up. John was never to bully and coddle this big childlike man after to-day, and he had a swift realization of how much he would miss his trustful, incompetent reliance upon him.

But all Arthur recognized was the certainty of John's white and haggard face, and he suddenly began to talk of something besides money.

"See here, John," he said, "I don't suppose you know it, but you look like the devil! You've been working yourself to death. It's silly for a man worth as much money as you are. If you don't take care of yourself, how are you ever to get any enjoyment out of it, after all your grubbing? What's the good of it to you, anyhow? What you need is a vacation."

"That's what I called you in to discuss," John replied, in a voice out of which, try as he would, he could not entirely rule all emotion. "I hope you'll be able to take what I tell you without any heroics." (John was certainly not sure the hope he expressed was sincere, but for the minute he was concerned entirely with the necessity for playing at his rôle of leadership to the end.) "I find I must have a vacation

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in a worse sense than you meant. I'm sick—done for, in fact. You'll have to get along without me."

John's hope that Arthur might not be entirely unconcerned was more than realized. He seemed completely amazed at the serious hopelessness of John, whom he had seen all these years meet with quiet confidence every emergency which had crossed his path. Then Arthur remembered his own dejection whenever he was even slightly indisposed, and attempted the consolation he was accustomed to demand on such occasions.

"Oh come now, John, you musn't let yourself grow grumpy just because you're a bit off color. You feel so blue because you never knew what it was to be sick before. A few weeks of rest will send you back here as fit as a fiddle. You forget both of us are getting along in life. We've got to expect a little upset now and then."

John shook his head. "This isn't a little upset," he informed Arthur gravely. "I've got to quit work to-day and never go back to it again. I shan't last much longer. I'm not sure I want to. Did you ever hear of a disease called *angina*? That's what's the matter with me."

Of the two, Arthur was certainly the more deeply horrified. In the intense self-pity which John felt as he told of the sudden blow which had fallen upon him,

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he found time for an enormous sense of relief at the certainty that somebody cared.

Arthur however, shaken as he was, was still incredulous. It was impossible! It was John who spoke of his own death—John, with whom it seemed ridiculously incongruous to associate weakness or disease.

"Nonsense," he protested, with an effort at hearty unconcern. "You think you know everything about medicine because you can always manage to trip up a medical witness. I've sent my machine home, but yours is still down-stairs. I noticed it when I came in. You get right into it with me and I'll take you to a doctor. We'll go to the best—to Deeming."

"I've just come from there," John replied, "that's how I know."

Arthur's consternation was complete. He seemed at a loss to understand.

At last he exclaimed explosively: "He didn't tell you that! Not just as you've put it! He couldn't have been so brutal!" John made a gesture of dissent.

"It wasn't his fault," he answered. "He did his best to lie to me. I wouldn't let him. I had to know the truth and I wrung it from him."

The two sat in silence. Arthur's eyes had a suspicious moisture, but he tried hard to avoid any display of feeling. He was sure John wouldn't like him to be weak—poor John, who was behaving so splendidly himself.

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When he was sure he could talk without a quiver in his voice, he could think of no words really adequate. Idle lamentations had no place in dealing with John, and yet here was a situation before which his partner was as powerless as himself.

Finally he murmured, when the tense silence had become unbearably oppressive, "I don't know what to say to you, John. It's something I can't seem to grasp, that's all. Helen will be heart-broken. I don't see how we're going to get along without you. I almost wish it had been myself instead. Nobody would have found it hard to manage without me. I never would have been of any use to anyone, if you hadn't nursed me along all these years. I——" But here he broke down under the memory of their intimate comradeship of a score of years, now suddenly to be snapped.

"You'd have been a poor man, if you hadn't known me, but a happier one, maybe," John's mood of self-searching compelled him to confess. "I've forced you to do a host of things you weren't fit for. I'm afraid I've driven you pretty hard sometimes, Arthur."

"Don't," his partner choked. He was all too keenly conscious of his frequent secret impulse to rebel—his hours of temptation, after John had helped him to make all the money he could ever need, to desert this exacting master, who was never ready to rest. He would then have been free to enjoy his life in his own idle fashion; but now that liberty had come to him

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without warning and in such tragic guise, his thought was only of John's helpfulness, his watchfulness and his patience with such a blunderer as himself.

"You're right," John announced, sternly taking himself in hand. "We've no business to get maudlin about this thing. Everybody has to die some time. There's no reason why I should behave as though I were the first man who ever had to go through with the job. You musn't humor me in it. What I really wanted was to talk to you about the office."

Arthur made a gesture of despair. "I don't know what to do with the office," he groaned. "I can't take charge of it. I'll never be able to get along without you."

"No," John conceded, "you can't run it alone. Yet it would be a pity to lock the doors and throw away our clientèle. Good Lord, how we have worked to build up this practice!" He let a sigh escape him, but conquered the momentary vain regret and went on resolutely:

"I've been thinking it out for you. You've got to get a new partner—someone to take my place. None of the young chaps in the office will do. They have no initiative—no originality. It's my fault, I'm afraid. I've drilled them to obey my orders too well. I'm sorry for it now, since I've come to the end of things, but I couldn't help it. That's the way I was made. The people who work with me have to learn to do

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things my way!—I mean they *did* have to,” he corrected himself miserably.

“Well,” he continued, taking up his task again, “that means you have to find someone outside of our own force, and I’ve chosen the very man for you. It’s young Cushing.”

“Cushing,” Arthur exclaimed, “to take your place! Why he’s only a boy.”

“He’s nearly thirty, Arthur,” John argued patiently. “We were that age, or a bit younger, when we began to strike our gait—just about thirty.”

He paused for an instant and let the memories of the past surge through his mind. Then he returned once more to the present and its need.

“I’ve been watching his work. He’s the most promising of them all. He has a great future. It sounds silly and vain, I know, but his methods remind me of the way I used to try cases when I was his age. You must get hold of him to-day, before he learns from anyone else what’s happened to me. Make the best bargain you can with him. It’s a splendid chance for him. He’ll jump at it. He ought to accept a moderate share of the profits at the beginning. But get him, no matter what his terms are. Make him start in here at once. He must take complete command. He can have this room.

“You know,” John concluded, almost shamefacedly, “I’d see him myself and make terms with him,

but Deeming says I must try to avoid any mental strain, and it would tear me to shreds to sit here and start him in to do my work. You see I'm not a bit of good any more. I'm a different man since yesterday."

Arthur reached out and grasped John's hand and wrung it hard.

"Why need we do this at all, John?" he inquired. "Why can't you remain the head of the firm whether you work or not. It's your practice, you know. You created it. You might as well keep on getting your share of the profits. It shall be 'Howard, Chase & Cushing'."

But his masterful partner, even in his hour of affliction, would not yield to his own longing. "No," was his verdict, "I don't want to be linked with an enterprise whose policy I can't direct. It shall be 'Chase & Cushing'." He winced at the thought, but he showed no sign of indecision. He even steeled himself to a bitter lightness. "It could only be for a little while anyhow. It wouldn't be worth while having the name changed twice on all the office stationery. You forget I have an urgent engagement in another world."

"Don't talk that way, John!" Arthur murmured in genuine distress at his partner's brutal scourging of himself.

"I won't then, if it shocks you," John said, "but we might as well face the facts. Let's get ahead with

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our plans. Now remember this, Arthur, and never forget it: This office is to do no more finance. Give Cushing a free hand in everything else, but be firm there. It's a dangerous game. I knew how to play it. This boy may not. You never did. You've made your pile now and you have nothing to gain by risking one dollar of it. The profits here won't be what they used to be, but they'll be handsome enough. Stick to legal work. Nothing else. Is it a promise?"

"Of course," Arthur assented readily. "Whatever you think best, John. It's like you to bother about me at a time like this, anyhow."

John waved his thanks aside. Yesterday, he would have told himself they were well merited. To-day, somehow, all his ideas of human values were upset.

"That's about all then," he announced. "Such work as I've started, which can't be dropped, Cushing must deal with as best he can. Let him use his own discretion. I've ordered Berg to sell all my individual stock holdings. You'd better resign as director from all the Boards where you represented me. Have the bookkeeper strike a balance to-day and send me a check for whatever stands to my credit. Then you and Cushing can begin to-morrow with a clean slate. As for my share of the fees which have been earned up to date, but which have not yet been paid—particularly the Thorndyke fee—you can account to me whenever you get ready. Let one of the clerks clean

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out my desk and this room, and send the stuff out to my house."

He seemed to feel there was no more to be said, but Arthur was of a different mind.

"You've talked of nothing but what I ought to do," he urged. "You haven't seemed to think of what Helen or I might do for you."

John shrugged his shoulders impatiently. "What does one do for a man about to die? My personal affairs are in order; my will is in the vault at the Atlantic Trust & Deposit Company. Berg is buying me some more bonds, which can be put with the others. There's nothing to be done that I can think of; if anything occurs to me, I'll telephone you."

It seemed to hurt Arthur to find John meeting his genuine emotion with such an armor of assumed cynicism. John noticed his pathetic, impotent desire to be helpful and repented of his words and manner.

"I am sorry I can't talk and behave the way the holy men in the books do," was his apology. "Everything's twisted to me this morning. The things I thought important yesterday seem silly to-day. My chief feeling is one of complete disgust with everything. That's what makes me seem so ungracious, I suppose, but if it does you any good to know it, you're the only thing in the world I feel human about. You sort of take away the sense of utter loneliness. Don't mind what I say."

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It wasn't easy for John to make this confession. He did it because he was sure it would please Arthur to be taken somewhat behind the veil of his misery, and he was amazed to discover how anxious he was to leave tender memories in the heart of this big, incompetent Arthur, whose value had seemed slight to him when they were working side by side.

"John," Arthur suggested, encouraged by his partner's softened attitude, "I've a plan for you. Hilda's away. There's no one at your home but the servants. You can come out to us this morning and stay there. Helen and the kids would adore it. They'll nurse you and amuse you and keep you from getting blue. After a few weeks, you won't mind one bit not being able to work. You'll get to be a confirmed loafer like me, and I'll come home early in the afternoons and sit out on the porch with you and remind you of the old days, when you used to pitch into Helen and myself for wanting new babies, when you needed the money for business. We'll fight all our old fights over again and enjoy them more than we did the first time. By and by you'll stop fretting and take good care of yourself (Helen will make you!) and you can live until you're eighty without an ache or a pain."

John smiled gently at his enthusiasm. Arthur really did care for him. There was something beautiful about it. Could such feelings only exist in weak men like this one? Wasn't this simple kindliness an in-

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tegral part of inefficiency itself? At any rate, it was very grateful to him as he stood in the shadow of impending death.

Very reluctantly then, he pushed Arthur's suggestion from him.

"It's an enticing picture you paint, old chap," he replied, "but I can't do it. I'd only be a horror to you and Helen and myself. You know what I'm like. I have to fight things out alone. I'll have to do it with this, too. I don't want to talk to people about it—not even to you and Helen. I've had a spasm of garrulity this morning. It will be gone to-morrow. I'll be a glum, forbidding iceberg. You'd better get out of my way."

"What are you going to do then?" Arthur demanded, displaying a genuine disappointment, but seeming to recognize from long experience the unyielding quality of his colleague's decisions.

"I'm not sure, Arthur," he reflected slowly. "Deeming has ordered me to join Hilda at Palm Beach. It was his idea to get me decently out of the way. I guess I'll go. One feels it's his legitimate privilege to make his own wife miserable."

Arthur had realized vaguely for a long time a sense of something amiss in John's relations to his wife. He wanted very much to make sure someone would take charge of his stricken friend and coddle him and try to lift the gloom of his certain fate from

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him. He felt sure Hilda was not the person for the task, but he hardly knew how to urge John not to seek out his own wife at a time of calamity. "If John could only bring himself to make an appeal to Hilda's sympathy," he thought, but John would never do it! Perhaps——

His thought broke into a spoken suggestion. "Would you let me write to Hilda? It might make it easier for both of you if you don't have to tell her yourself." He could write such a letter as would touch Hilda's heart and break down the reserve between these two. Hilda was such a good sort. Arthur could never understand why she and John couldn't be comfortable and "chummy" like Helen and himself. But then John, wonderful as he was, was hardly a comfortable or "chummy" man.

John, however, put a flat veto on Arthur's well-meant interference. If Hilda had not been able to adjust herself to him during all these years, she wasn't to be begged to do it out of pity. How he did wince at the idea of pity! It was all right for Arthur to see how stricken he was. Arthur had some cause for regret on his own account. To lose such a partner as John Howard was a signal business disaster, if it was nothing more. But the others—it was unbearable!

"No," he insisted, once more dominant in his own affairs, if no longer in the field of commerce, "don't you send one line to Hilda! Perhaps I shan't tell her

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any of the details at all. It won't do any good to harrow her. I'll think things out for myself. I'll surely see you again before I go. I'll drive out to your house and say good-bye. And now you'd better get back to your work. You want to get hold of Cushing immediately. Don't bother about me. I'll get out of here in a few minutes and I'm not coming back. I'll leave my keys on my desk. Say good-bye for me to everyone in the office after I'm gone. I don't want them to know until then. I want to get out quietly."

Both men rose and clasped hands again silently, each overwhelmed by a flood of memories. Then swiftly, and without more words, Arthur obeyed John's wish, and left him to spend his last minutes as the senior partner, alone.

But he was not destined to remain uninterrupted. Arthur had scarcely gone, when the door was timidly opened and the managing clerk appeared. John frowned at him forbiddingly. "I thought I gave orders I would see no one," he said sternly.

"Yes sir," Cline admitted abjectly. "But there's a lady who's been asking for you. She won't go away. She was here day before yesterday, when you were at the Atlantic Trust meeting, and yesterday when you were in Annapolis. I told her she couldn't see you today. She insisted if you saw her card, you'd give her a few minutes. I thought I ought to show it to you."

John reached out his hand. Why should he waste

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his energy disciplining Cline, who would receive no more commands from him? And besides, now that he had nothing but blankness to look forward toward, he was filled with a mild curiosity to know who this insistent visitor might be.

"Let's see her name," he ordered, more mildly than Cline had permitted himself to hope.

He laid the card on the desk before him and stared incredulously at the letters which danced unsteadily before his bewildered eyes. It was a tiny card and it read simply:

MARGARET GILMOR, M.D.

"Let her come in," he directed huskily. As the clerk left the room, John's hand stole instinctively to his vest pocket and clutched there a little glass bead, filled with a pale yellow fluid. He made ready to crush it, should his need grow greater.

IV

BOTH John and Margaret, as they stood facing each other across his desk, in the instant before they felt constrained to lapse into the commonplaces of conventional speech, thought with troubled memories of their last meeting. Each peered hungrily into the other's eyes, in the effort to find how much of the youth-filled companion of that former day had survived the long years of strain and disillusionment. To John it seemed incredible how few ravages age had made upon Margaret. Her hair, the beautiful contour of her face, the slender grace of her figure—all these showed little trace of her two-score years. Yet, a closer scrutiny disclosed ample evidence proving she had not spared herself. Here and there a tell-tale line in her forehead, or about the mouth, recorded hours of work and studious effort. She carried herself with that self-possession and confidence in her strength and discernment, which marks the woman who has lived many years in a stormy world. Her eyes looked out on life with the expression of one who has seen much of pain and unhappiness, and has done her share in coping with them. They were no longer the trustful, unsuspecting eyes John remembered, but were filled instead with sympathy and knowledge. One would unhesitatingly have guessed her age, but could hardly have spoken

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of her without adding that in spite of her forty years, she was strikingly handsome—perhaps all the more so because it was vividly apparent with how much vigor she had lived.

So this was Margaret! She had come back to him now that he was about to die! She had lived her own life for twenty-one years. How could he know what it had made of her? Yet this was the woman whom he had taught to love him; who had been ready to let him lead her wherever he would; who would, even now, have been the mother of his sons, if he had not cast her aside in his upward flight! He had never been able to banish her from his memory. He had never wanted to. He had idealized her—loved in an indefinite boyish fashion to dream of her as the embodiment of all a woman's charms and virtues. In his thoughts she had remained a girl of nineteen. And now, on this day of the ending of all things, she had appeared once more with her own mysterious burden of experience, and he could not even guess what manner of woman she had become!

When she spoke, he started. It seemed so strange to hear those tones again! In sudden recollection, he seemed to see the tawdry little dining-room of the old boarding house, with its glowing coal stove. He could actually smell the faint distasteful odor of the warmed-over supper. He could hear the tinkle of Margaret's teacups. Then the mirage passed, and as before he

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was standing courteously in the spacious office (which would be Cushing's to-morrow) listening attentively to this distinguished-looking, middle-aged woman.

"You're not exactly an approachable man, Mr. Howard, are you?" she began lightly.

Mr. Howard! Could it be that her memories of him had grown faint, or was she still determined, after twenty-one years, to give no sign of the humiliation he had inflicted upon her?

"If you had written, or let me know in some way, who it was who wanted to talk with me, you know I'd have been only too eager to see you," he assured her, waving her to a seat.

"How could I know you'd remember who Margaret Gilmor was?" she asked smilingly. "I have heard every great man is besieged by a host of men and women who claim to remember him in the days when he was as unimportant as themselves."

His piercing glance was directed straight at her eyes. Why should she want to play at cross purposes with him?

"You must have known very well," he remarked gravely, "how impossible it was that I should ever have forgotten you." The color rose to her cheeks, but she seemed determined to preserve her attitude of pleasant impersonality.

"I'm glad I haven't altogether passed out of your memory," she went on. "I shan't feel so presump-

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tuous in what I'm going to ask. Under any circumstances, you're sure to decide I've become a troublesome, meddlesome creature." He made a gesture of dissent, but she continued in more serious tones. "You're not interested in the men and women in whose name I've come to appeal to you. You're probably even prejudiced against them. If you're going to do what I ask, it must be simply because you want to be kind to me."

"I had hoped," he responded with unfeigned disappointment, "you were about to give me an opportunity to serve you. I'm sorry you're here merely to plead the cause of somebody else."

Unconsciously she assumed a more rigid attitude, and a chill might have been detected in her voice.

"If you remember me at all," she retorted, "you must have known I should never have intruded myself upon you for any purpose which concerned myself alone." It seemed to occur to her that this was not the most tactful prelude to a request for a favor of some magnitude. She would have softened the sentence she had used, if she could have brought herself to do so, but after all, she had said nothing she could retract. John was looking upon the face of the same woman who had been too proud a score of years before, to gain by compassion what love had been too weak to give. But if she could not unsay her words, she

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could, at least, explain her mission, and this she hastened to do:

"You see, sometimes there are things I can do for others, I wouldn't do for myself. I came to believe you, and nobody but you, could save hundreds of people from a great unhappiness. I didn't believe you'd listen with much patience to anyone except myself. When I was sure of that, I became sure I had no right to throw away the one chance of all these men and women because of any personal hesitancy on my part. It seemed almost providential that I had once known you. I had to come."

She seemed ablaze with earnestness. As he noted each token of her enthusiasm, he, with the vision of death before his eyes, wondered what phase of petty human activity could really be important enough to move anyone to such interest. Yet it was her human emotion which he found so attractive. Surely, it was all a paradox.

"I'm sorry," he informed her, with the same deep gravity as before, "you found it distasteful to appeal to me. I should like, if I knew how, to remove that feeling. I might——"

She interrupted him with a smiling return of her former manner of pleasant impersonal ease.

"Please don't mind my silly words. I'm a poor advocate, but I'm the only one the people who sent me have. You're an important man and I oughtn't let you

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waste your time talking of the unimportant messenger, instead of the message."

Behind her smile there was plainly apparent a resolute intention not to give John Howard an opportunity to talk to her about her own life. He recognized her meaning and realized it must be respected, at least for the present. After he had given her what she wanted—(it couldn't be anything he was unable to grant)—she might be more gracious. Probably she wanted money for some foolish scheme to encourage inefficients. Well, she should have it—enough of it to take her breath away. Perhaps then she would unbend.

"You give me no choice," he said, "but to follow your commands. In what way can I serve your friends? Who are these people of whom you speak?"

"They're my neighbors and my patients," she announced eagerly. "For six years I've chosen to live and to practice in East Baltimore instead of among the people in your class. The men and women down there have grown fond of me. I've tried to help them when they were sick and in trouble, and they're in ghastly trouble now. Surely, in all these months you must have heard or read something about the garment-workers' lock-out."

His brow grew ruffled. He did not approve of strikes or strikers. They were always troubling the waters of commerce. They made for a waste of effort. So Margaret was allowing herself to be drawn

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by her sentimentality into these foolish and vulgar broils! His boyish diagnosis had not, after all, been an error.

She noticed his disapproval with some concern. "You're not connected with the clothing industry, are you?" she demanded breathlessly.

"No," he replied, "I was until a few years ago. Then I parted with my holdings, and at the same time ceased to be counsel for any of the garment making companies."

"Oh!" she exclaimed hopefully, "you didn't approve of their methods! That was the reason?"

"Not at all," he stated, in a matter-of-fact tone. He wasn't going to make pretences to her. "I originated many of their methods. I directed their policies. The business came to demand too much time and thought for the amount of profit involved. I found an opportunity to dispose of my interests at a substantial figure, and I took advantage of it."

She seemed deeply distressed by his answer.

"I suppose there's no use in my going on with my story then," she concluded. "If you used to be associated with the employers, you couldn't help the workers now."

Her deduction impressed him as being girlish—almost childish—in its naïveté. "Why not?" he asked. "My connection with these corporations is a thing of the past. I can't pretend to any great sympathy for

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your protégés, but if it will be pleasing to you, there's no reason why I shouldn't do whatever you want. I presume they want a contribution to the Union's treasury. It's pretty empty, I imagine, by this time."

The look she flashed on him should have left him no doubt as to the infinite distance they had drifted apart. All the scorn of the quixotic idealist for the practical materialist was expressed in her eyes and lips. It cost her a real effort to suppress her contempt for a state of mind and feelings which could measure all things in terms of dollars. But she was here in the cause of many hopeless men. John Howard was disposed to be kind; she must not throw away her precious opportunity.

"No," she answered slowly, "I haven't come for money. The treasury is empty. The men and women and their babies go hungry. Every day pathetic children are brought to my office. Their mothers say they're sick, but I find only one thing the matter with them. They don't get enough to eat. The men have been locked out nearly four months. Help from the Unions in other cities and from private sources comes in very slowly. Things are desperate. But we haven't come uptown to beg yet. I want something more than money."

"You want me to intercede with the factory owners?" John suggested, as she paused, before explaining her needs. It would be impossible for him

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to do this in person, now that he was dangerously ill, but he could still influence others, who would act in his stead. He would not deny her. He approved of industrial peace, as far as it could be obtained without conceding too much. The time for a truce had come. The labor element had been starved into being reasonable. He would meet her views.

But once more he had misunderstood her thought.

"We want no intercession," she protested, again ablaze with the enthusiasm of her righteous cause. "Why do you suppose these men are letting their women and children suffer and die? They don't intend to be beaten. The employers mean nothing less than to kill the union once and for all. The men believe it's worth dying for—and so do I!"

Then he began to comprehend the depth of the gulf between them. He had become a man of force and action,—practical to the tips of his fingers, a man of enormous wealth, and with it all, accustomed to measure men and things in sane terms of utility. The woman who might have been his wife had, with the years, become a dreamer, a thing made up of impulses and ardent sympathies, one of that band who go smiling to death for an idea—an idea whose greatest beauty lies in its inability ever to be transformed into dull fact.

He sighed. There would be no room for companionship with her in the short time he was still to

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spend on earth. She was past argument, even had he not been too weary to attempt it. He must be as pleasant as he could, do what lay in his power to please her, for the sake of "auld lang syne," dismiss her graciously, and finish his pilgrimage alone.

"We'll manage to hold out somehow," she went on. "I don't know how, but we'll manage. But meantime, there's another danger threatening—a vital danger—and that's why I came to you. Do you know of the suits the employers have brought against our men?"

"In a vague way," John responded. "I know the four clothing companies obtained judgments against the members of the Union for conspiracy to boycott them. Is that what you mean?"

"Yes," she said, "every man who belonged to the Union was sued. It wasn't the kind of proceeding usual in labor troubles. I'm told the employers generally get the courts to give them injunctions to prevent the strikers from doing certain things; but this time they let the men print an advertisement in newspapers all over the country, telling of their troubles. Then they brought these suits, claiming judgments against all these poor, ignorant men, for the injury they're supposed to have done to the companies' business. The employers won their case. The judgments amount to a tremendous sum of money—over two hundred thousand dollars. I could never have believed it

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possible for our men to lose; but I was in court when the trial ended. Am I making myself clear?" she asked, interrupting herself.

"I understand the situation as well as I can, without knowing the exact facts," he said. "The court must have ruled that a conspiracy had been proved to boycott the goods of the companies. All of the members of the Union were parties to the unlawful scheme, actively or passively. Therefore, they were responsible in damages for whatever money loss they inflicted on the plaintiffs."

His matter-of-fact, technical summary of the affair seemed to her to range him definitely among the ranks of the oppressors of Labor. He talked precisely as the cold, heartless judge had done at the trial. He showed no comprehension of the warm, human passions lying beneath the surface of this struggle. Her gesture was one of baffled misunderstanding.

"I guess I haven't made you see it perfectly," she insisted, "or it wouldn't seem so casual to you. It's unbelievable! The Union all through this trouble has been on its good behavior. There's never been a labor dispute with less violence. The leaders at every meeting cautioned the rank and file to respect the Law. This advertisement didn't say one word other than the literal truth. There must be some weapon Labor may use. It can't be that Law is always on the side of the capitalist."

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"Suppose," he suggested, "you tell me the exact wording of this advertisement. Then I'll be able to tell you with more certainty whether the court's ruling was correct."

"I brought a copy of it with me," she told him. "I feared, perhaps, you had given it no attention when it appeared in the papers."

She looked at him reproachfully as she said this; but he was already engrossed in a study of the scrap of newspaper she had extracted from her little hand-satchel. His entire attitude had changed. His air of dejection was cast aside. His face was full of keen intelligence. He was a lawyer, at work once more, if only for a brief hour, at the task he understood and loved.

No word of the printed appeal escaped his scrutiny, as he read and re-read the clipping lying on his desk. It ran:

THE PIONEER CLOTHING COMPANY
THE ALPHA MANUFACTURING COMPANY
THE COLUMBIA CLOTHING COMPANY

and

THE PATAPSCO COMPANY
have locked out their garment workers. The
employees and their children are starving.

The Men are Desperate.

DO YOU THINK YOU WILL FEEL COMFORTABLE, OR EVEN SAFE, INSIDE
OF A SUIT OF CLOTHES MADE BY THESE COMPANIES?

Without any comment, John rose from his chair and extracted a book from the revolving shelf near the

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window. After a rapid scrutiny of its pages, he rang a bell at the side of his desk. A boy appeared promptly and vanished with equal dispatch when he had heard the order: "Bring me Volume 100 of the Maryland Reports, and also Volume 208 of the Supreme Court Reports."

Margaret neither understood nor sympathized with this display of the legal attitude. It seemed absurd to her—all the more so because it was part of a scheme of government which ruled men's lives and her own. She had laid a problem before this highly-trained man, —a man conceded to be a master in his field. He did not ask, "Is this newspaper notice true? Is it unjust? Is it fair to punish a whole group of men for its publication?" He sent, instead, for books, to find out what other men, perhaps far less thoughtful and learned than himself, had said about some other case, arising, it may have been, under circumstances totally different from those now involved.

When John had finished reading the citations in the two books which had been brought him, he turned once more to Margaret.

"It's a delicate point," he informed her, with the specialist's appreciation of the niceties of his art. It never occurred to him how nearly at that minute he was akin to Dr. Deeming, who had taken that morning a similar pride in his accurate and fatal diagnosis.

"Under the Law, a boycott, enforced by an actual

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or implied threat of any kind, is illegal. The question is whether this advertisement contains a threat. Its wording is innocent on its face, but the phrase 'Would you feel comfortable, or even safe,' certainly seems to have a dangerous hidden meaning. The judge's ruling is the view one would expect in a conservative State, such as Maryland. As I said, it's a doubtful question, with the odds against you."

He had delivered his opinion. She ought to be satisfied. Men were accustomed to pay huge sums to know his views, but, of course, he was glad to have given her the benefit of his acumen, as a matter of grace. He was surprised to find her strangely unsatisfied.

"Is that all you can see in it?" she inquired,—once more letting a trace of scorn creep into her manner. "A pretty point of doubtful law?"

"What else ought I to see?" he asked in his turn. He spoke patiently. His ardor in this last bit of work was rapidly dying away; he was wondering once more what was the use of all this inconsequential heat and passion.

"I'll tell you what it means to me," she broke forth, eager to find if there was no way to kindle in him any compassion for the suffering men and women she yearned to help. "It means each poor ignorant man, who has worked long overtime hours to buy a little home, is going to have it snatched away from him—the

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poor, squalid house for which he has been paying money into a building association for years and years—just because he wanted a bit of the city for his very own. It means that the young woman, who has starved all the longings a girl ought to have for pretty things, in order to scrape together a little dowry, must give her wedding portion to the ‘Alpha’ or the ‘Columbia,’ instead. Why should she mind putting off her wedding five or ten years? It means some savings bank account, which has grown a little bigger every week, to bring an old father or mother from Russia or Poland, will help the enemies instead of the friends of a worker, who toiled like a galley-slave, because he was fool enough to love someone. The old people who want to see their children again before they die—why should your Law care about them?

“It means more than that. It means there can never again be another strike or another organized resistance to a lock-out, no matter how badly our men may be treated. It means the union must be dissolved. We printed nothing but the truth and we tried to obey the Law. If these judgments stand, we have fair notice served on us never to cross our masters’ will again. Our last weapon is struck from our hands. We may not even appeal to the public to punish our employers, but the Court puts a lash into their hands, always ready to be used against us. We shall know we can never win

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a fight again. At our first move, they steal all our pitiful little savings."

She paused, breathless and flushed by the intensity of the wrongs she pictured, and almost in tears, as she realized how unmoved he seemed by the sorrows she found beyond endurance. He, for his part, was lost once more in a maze of speculation about his own tragedy—ininitely more pathetic to his mind than the one which racked her heart. He was thinking, too, of this Margaret, whose life once lay so close to his own, and who was now hopelessly adrift on the sea of impractical altruism—wasting all her charm and wit in serving sodden creatures, whose only claim on her was their stupid inability to guard their own interests.

She brought him sharply to himself by demanding earnestly: "Don't you care? Are these things nothing to you?"

"I do care," he replied, but with no great enthusiasm. "I wish the world were a more comfortable place for all of us; but it seems to be a war zone, and battles mean suffering. Nobody escapes," he added wearily. Was not he himself struck down on the field he had conquered?

He continued to expound his views with the same quiet authority which she found so irritating.

"I did not create these conditions. Neither did the owners of the garment factories, for that matter. Most of us are sorry to find life means killing or being

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killed. None of us made these laws of which you complain. We have to use them as well as we can to defend ourselves. Surely you see no particular virtue in being awkward, instead of adept in the fight."

He was making no greater impression upon her mood than she had on his; and he was prompt to realize the futility of the discussion—all the more since he was beyond all interest in such trivial affairs. He brought the conversation back once more to the specific problem before them.

"You're not interested in what I think of these questions. You wanted my concrete help. I've told you the Law; not perhaps what it should be, but what it is. Now what would you like me to do?"

The spirit seemed to go utterly out of her. His frigid practical common sense had robbed her of hope and enthusiasm. She went on with her task almost mechanically.

"We want to appeal this case. If we can't win it, we might as well give up everything at once, dissolve the union and let the men go back and beg for work as non-union men. You seem to think our chances are poor. We need counsel who will know how to manage such matters. One of our own lawyers tried the case last time—Schwartzman. Poor fellow!—He did his best, but he blundered all the way through. The judge ruled against him on every point. He can't speak English very well. To send him to the Court of

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Appeals would be useless. He says so himself. We haven't any money. There isn't enough to feed the people decently, much less to pay the fee of a good lawyer. The costs of appeal are heavy. We have almost come to the end of our road, unless—" she ended, "you can see your way clear to help us."

Her dejection swayed him more potently than her fervid eloquence. She was unhappy. It was true her sadness grew out of meddling with matters she should have avoided; but still she was miserable, as he himself was. He must do something to lighten her burden.

"If money is what you require," he therefore hastened to say, "you need give yourself no further concern. These friends of yours will care very little what may be my feelings regarding their position. My action is frankly influenced only by a desire to meet your wishes. That is no affair of theirs. You may draw on me freely for all the expenses of the appeal. I will even suggest to you, if you desire it, the name of the best lawyer for your work. You'll need a strong man, particularly if Schwartzman has tangled up the record in the trial below. Whatever the fees are, I'll pay."

He leaned back in his chair, awaiting some sign of gratitude. But Margaret's face showed nothing but sorrowful pity—pity for him, the magnanimous giver of lavish gifts! So this was the man she had been ready to marry—this purse-proud over-lord, who

thought the highest form of service was the flinging of gold into the dirt for beggars to scramble over.

Her reply was framed in this spirit. "I have no right—coming here, as I have done, on behalf of others—to refuse your offer. They are desperate and unhappy men, and what you give, they will, as you say, accept. They won't analyze your motives. But I'd be taking your money under false pretences if I let you believe you had done what I hoped of you—if I didn't show you how bitterly disappointed in you I am!"

His surprise at her speech was entirely sincere. He had been wholly engrossed in his own problem, and what more she could want from him he could not guess. He wasn't even hurt or angry.

"What was your hope?" he inquired. "What did you expect of me?"

"I thought you'd tell me you yourself would take full charge of our appeal," she said. "All through this trouble, men have said to me, 'If you could interest John Howard, he could win the case. He can win cases other men—good men—would lose.' I know you wouldn't do it because you cared much about the Union, or how its members suffered." She hesitated a minute, but then went on bravely, with what evidently seemed to her hard words to speak: "I believed you'd do it, whether you found it distasteful or not, because it was I, who after all these years had come and asked it of you."

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He realized, almost with a sense of shock, that she had been thinking of the John Howard who had lived and ruled yesterday. Of the broken, helpless wreck of to-day she could know nothing. Chance, which he had heretofore dominated in his own masterful fashion, was taking, at the end, a usurious and brutal revenge. Not content with all the torment she had decreed to be his portion, she had sent to him this phantom of the days of his youth, to beg at his hand the one favor he was powerless to grant.

Hopeless as the task appeared, he still made an effort to reconcile her to his denial of her request.

"If it were in any way possible for me to argue your appeal myself, I'd do it. There is a compelling reason which makes it impossible for me to give this case my personal attention; but what difference does that make? If I give you another man—a reliable one—why should you care whether it's he or I?"

She had leaped without much thought to a conclusion. John Howard would not appear in the matter, because it might interfere with his business connections. Even the memory of their idyl and its ruthless ending was not strong enough to induce him to take a step which might prejudice his position as one of the masters of the commercial life of the city. Her mood was full of bitterness and humiliation, as she forced herself to make a final plea for his aid, but she strove to forget

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herself and think only of the starving men and women who had sent her, and of their great need.

“Do you honestly believe,” she inquired, earnestly, “you could find us a lawyer as skilful as yourself? We have been led to suppose no one has such success as you in the Court of Appeals. I’m frank to confess there is a sentiment in my own feeling toward the question. It would be beautiful if you’d allow no one but yourself to attempt this one thing I want more than anything else in the world. But it’s too big a matter to be governed by a mere woman’s feelings. Only remember you said our case was a dangerous one, and tell me truly, is there anyone else who can gain for us, as well as you can, the full benefit of our poor forlorn chance?”

Her solemn question demanded nothing less than truth; nor was John’s nature one whose doubts of his own ability gave him a loophole of escape. He was sure there was no one who could bring to bear on the Court the same compelling persuasiveness as himself. He understood how the judges’ minds worked. He had made a study of the mental temperament of everyone of the Court’s members. Besides, he knew how to talk. It was an art in which he admitted no rival. He was a specialist. He was no orator. Maudlin vamping was not for him. The intrinsic beauty of a discourse was something he contemptuously ignored. But in forcing men to adopt his views upon debatable

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questions, he believed himself to be unique. Nobody could do his work as he did it.

He accepted this with such simple sincerity, it would have seemed to him a waste of effort to attempt convincing Margaret to the contrary. His superiority was axiomatic. So he could only reply:

"You wouldn't believe me if I said the man I'll get you could take charge of the appeal as well as I; but I'll get you the very best man available—a better man than the other side has. Really, I wish I could make you understand how gladly I'd try this case myself, if I could. It's only because I absolutely cannot——"

His constant repetition of his inability to do what seemed to her so clear a duty, was an added factor in her humiliation. He would not do what she had stooped to beg of him; but neither would he answer with a flat, brutal negative. He persisted in being courteous, in offering her worthless substitutes, for which he expected gratitude. She could stand it no longer. She interrupted his half-finished sentence by rising to take her leave.

"I've no power to force you," she remarked coldly. "There is no reason why you need make any explanations or apologies to me."

So she was leaving him,—going without having exchanged one word about herself or himself. The estrangement between them had grown greater rather

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than less by reason of this morning's meeting. It all appeared confusing and unnecessary to John. If he were himself, he knew he could have taken control of the interview, guiding it into proper channels, and bringing it to a close of triumphant reconciliation. But he was not himself. He was unutterably tired. His morning had been crowded with mental strain and unhappiness. His very soul ached with weariness and distaste for all things.

Still, in spite of it all, he made a feeble effort to assert himself.

"Sit down again, Margaret," he commanded, boldly striking a note of surprise by refusing to accept her studied choice to speak of him as "Mr. Howard." "I don't want you to go, feeling as you now do."

But at this return to the voice and manner of his earlier years, Margaret's tense self-control suddenly snapped.

"I will not sit down," she answered fiercely. "I ought never have come to you at all. You'll never know how hard I found it. No one but a woman could understand that. And when I did come, you put me off with polite phrases—offered me some of your money-bags, when what I asked was yourself. That's the one thing you were never willing to give to anyone. It was not merely because you have no sympathy with the union that you won't try this case. Most of the time, I dare say, you don't care what happens to your

clients. You think their cause is wrong as often as right. It was because you won't allow anyone—not me, nor anyone else—to swerve you one inch from your own plans. No one's pain or suffering is so important to you as your own schemes.”

He sat perfectly quiet, watching her. She had expected some expression of anger or impatience. Its absence somehow irritated her the more. He was above petty passions; he could view resentment, just as he did misery, from his own lofty attitude of inscrutable detachment.

She went on a little less angrily and with more real regret.

“ I know I've no right to talk to you like this. You didn't have to see me at all. You never made any effort in all these years to find out what had become of me, and it was I who came to you. But since we did meet again, I want you to know how much you've fallen short of what I once hoped of you. What you call success, has been a bad thing for you, John Howard. When you were a boy, for all your egotism, there was a charm and nobility about you. You've killed them. You've exchanged them for money and the power to put up tall buildings and make men do what you want. Do you think it was worth while? You haven't one true human emotion, and you haven't inspired one in anyone else. Some day you'll grow old and get ready to die, and you'll see what it's all worth

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to you! You'll wonder why you worked so hard for a pile of dead leaves!"

Her passion exhausted itself. In a quick reaction, she realized she had said too much. He was so pale, she was almost alarmed. Yet she had said nothing but the truth. He continued to gaze at her in the same uncanny fashion. She had added to all his other woes. She had managed to cause his wound to bleed again with her thoughtless tirade about the empty worthlessness of his work. How hard and merciless these fanatics were! With all their chatter about sympathy, they had none to give, except to their inferiors, who begged for it abjectly; they gave compassion, for all the world, precisely as the vulgar rich man they jeered at doled out alms to cringing mendicants; and with it all, they were perfectly sure of their own virtue!

Her bitterness had engendered a corresponding feeling in him. He couldn't make her understand; perhaps it wasn't worth while; but he could at least put her completely in the wrong by telling her why he had refused her case. It would show her how little she could rely on her own judgments. It would cut away the ground from all she had said; she would be left in entire rout and confusion. To pierce her proud armor of superior righteousness, it would be worth while exhibiting his own fatal malady. Anyhow, she would be sure to hear of his illness soon. The city

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would ring with it. He would give himself this joyless amusement.

She was already about to leave the office, when he spoke. There was neither friendliness nor anger in his voice. It was dry and full of sarcasm.

"Like many of your well-meaning friends, who devote their lives to uplifting us, your conclusions are formed without knowing any of the facts. You revolutionists would change the world, without stopping to find out what's wrong with it. You love all mankind, except those who won't do what you want. For all your prating, you haven't even enough tolerance to learn why they won't obey you. As for myself, I was about to tell you I am unable to try your case, because this morning your distinguished colleague, Dr. Deeming, forbade it. I have to die instead. I realize this involves some little inconvenience to the garment-workers' union. I regret sincerely my thoughtlessness in choosing such an inopportune time and ailment as I have done. My only excuse is my complete ignorance of the request you were on the verge of making."

He had intended putting her into an indefensible position,—filling her thoughts to overflowing with keen regret for all she had done and said. He had his wish. She even could find nothing to resent in his cutting irony. She had deserved it, and much more. She sank back into her chair, unable to put her scattered ideas

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into words. Her mobile face spoke of shocked sympathy. She held out her hand, as though pleading to be forgiven.

He rejected it with more vigorous emotion than he had shown during the whole morning.

“Why should what I tell you have any effect on you?” he asked bitterly. “It doesn’t change anything. You said my work was worthless; that I myself am worthless and that some day I’d get ready to die and see it. Now the time’s come when I have to get ready. None of it made any difference to you till you saw it under your own eyes. If you were right, you ought to be glad to see yourself vindicated. If you were wrong, you ought to have been sorry without needing any such demonstration. As for your pity, I don’t want it! It’s bought too cheaply! It goes out to anyone who has an ache or a pain—no matter how he got it, or what he was doing before!”

He remembered suddenly Deeming’s orders to avoid excitement. He forced himself to be silent. She would go now. He had had his revenge. He would pay for it probably by another heart spasm. He felt strangely apprehensive. He opened his handkerchief and furtively tried to slip into it one of his little glass beads. He hoped she would not notice his action, but she had been watching him narrowly, with the practised eye of a physician, and the little *perl*, full of its

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pale yellow fluid, gave her its hint of all the tragedy into which she had unwittingly stepped.

By this time she had altogether recovered her poise. She was no longer the labor advocate. She was the carefully-taught and experienced practitioner of medicine. She spoke very gently to the stricken man.

"You saw Dr. Deeming this morning?" He nodded. "And he told you what was the matter with you?"

"He did," John answered, still annoyed by her sudden solicitude. "I made him. You seem to have guessed from this amyl nitrite *perl*. I forgot for the instant you were a doctor. Now you know. I have to stop work. If you'd come here this afternoon, you'd have found another man at my desk. I was getting ready to leave when you were announced. My orders are imperative. I'm to spend the interval prior to my final exit, as you have so kindly suggested, counting my dry leaves."

"Don't"—Margaret protested in genuine distress. "I can't tell you how sorry I am. It was unpardonable of me! It was good enough of you to see me at all! It must have been a horrible strain,—all in the same morning, too. Can't you say you forgive me?"

She held out her hand, and he took it. After all, what difference did it make? He felt he had been rather childish, but nothing mattered much any longer. He wished she would go away and let him drive home

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and rest. She seemed to understand his anxiety to be left alone, and yet she lingered.

"Is there nothing I can do to make things easier, John?" she asked.

The old appealing tenderness came back into her voice. She had used the old name again. His indifference to her was drowned in memories of the Margaret who had once loved him with such complete forgetfulness of self.

He shook his head despairingly. "Nothing," he affirmed. "I'm done for."

"Just because you have angina——" she began.

"Oh, I know," he interjected. "Deeming rang the changes on that theme till it sickened me. If I keep quiet and do nothing but rot, perhaps I may keep alive awhile. Well, I don't want to. It's not worth the trouble."

She sighed. It all seemed pitiful to her. Then she added what Deeming had not said:

"You're not afraid to die, John? I can't imagine that of you."

"Certainly not!" he flashed back at her. "I can die as well as any man has done."

"Well, then," she said, as she rose to go, "you have one kind of work still before you. You've dealt with life after a masterful fashion. How are you going to deal with death?"

V

IT was nearly a week after Margaret's visit to John before they met again. John did not go to Palm Beach, as Dr. Deeming had ordered. Instead, he went to his home in Roland Park, to think long and inconclusive thoughts about the meaning of life and the mystery of death. Margaret's challenge had somehow lent a new aspect to his problem. He had assumed death to be a mere end to living. For her, apparently, it was something more—a situation to be met and moulded somehow into harmony with one's character. It was worth thinking about, even if there were no validity to the idea. Perhaps it was one of those illusions invented by man to fill the sense of void he cannot endure. At any rate, he meant to think his problem out. It was not his temperament to make believe he was well, and would live many years—to close his eyes to the approaching crisis.

It was for this reason he was so determined to avoid Palm Beach and Hilda. He felt, if he were with her, he would have to pretend to be cheerful; to mingle with her thoughtless, fashionable friends; to preserve a rigid sense of good taste, which excluded all thoughts of such uncouth things as disease and death.

So he called Hilda on the long-distance telephone, and chatted with her in the witty, shallow manner he

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could affect when he thought it necessary. This form of conversation had become the staple of daily exchange of words between John and his wife. He had never found it unduly burdensome to him, any more than calling a man on the Bench, for whom he had unmeasured contempt, "Your Honor." But now this affected cleverness required a colossal effort. His position was further complicated by the knowledge in his mind of the impending newspaper headlines about his illness. It would be impossible for a man like himself to withdraw from the management of so many important corporations in the city, without creating a furore of excitement, some of which must inevitably find a reflection in the press. It was his purpose to prepare Hilda to read such gossip without alarm. He told her, therefore, with strict injunctions to breathe no word of his plan to anyone, his intention to perpetuate a huge financial *coup*. She must not be alarmed by any rumors concerning him he might find it necessary to circulate. They would be most circumstantial, he assured her, with a cynical laugh. He might even decide to perish for a week or two, but as she could hear at the other end of the telephone line, he was in his usual rugged health, and only his morals were infirm. He hung up the receiver without one qualm of remorse. His death would not affect Hilda greatly; she managed already to get along without him most comfortably. She would find a black costume, with a

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touch of white here and there, highly becoming. The greatest service she could now render him was to keep away. If she had been at home, he would have gone abroad—not because he wasn't fond of her, in a way, or because she didn't do whatever she could to please him; but she was part of his life of pretence and mere externals, and in his last days he wanted to grapple with verities. He smiled sardonically, as he remembered he was beginning the search for the truths of life and death by lying to his wife, but one lie, even if repeated daily, seemed to him far less compromising than the thousand and one petty affectations and formalities to which he must conform if he resumed his daily round of existence with Hilda.

He had intended hunting up Margaret Gilmor next day. There were a host of things about which he wanted to talk to her. He had the best excuse for a visit, since, at her parting, he had made no definite arrangements for meeting the costs of the Appeal in the Garment Workers' case. However, he passed a wretched, sleepless night following the day of their interview, and when he arose next morning, it was to learn that Flaxman, his most prominent rival in the city's financial life, was evolving schemes to succeed him in control of the Atlantic Trust & Deposit Company. This man would upset his most cherished policies. He would punish his closest business associates for having been lieutenants of John Howard. Of

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course, John had known this must happen when he abandoned the helm, but its actual imminence was none the less unbearably bitter to him. And he could still prevent it; that was the most tantalizing of all his thoughts. It was only necessary for him to assert himself, to appear among the men who had never failed to obey his commands; to get a few options here and there on the Atlantic's stock and to order Berg to sell no more of his own holdings. In a turmoil of suppressed excitement, he decided he would balk Flaxman's plan. He didn't care whether it killed him or not. To the Devil with Deeming and his croaking! Ill as he was, and without sleep, he still was more than a match for these miserable harpies! Hurriedly he made his plans, ordered his chauffeur to bring his car to the door and, gulping down a hasty breakfast, made ready for a day of carnage.

The inexorable hand of his malady clutched him before he could leave his home. In the excruciating pain of the next few minutes, he ceased to care what became of the Atlantic, or Flaxman, or himself. Deeming, hurriedly summoned by the chauffeur, had ordered him to be put to bed, and had insisted on summoning Hilda. But although weak and exhausted, upon this point John was inexorable. He would not have her vacation disturbed. She had barely had time to become acclimated in Florida. He could be taken care of just as well in her absence, and if Deeming

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could not refrain from intruding his advice upon a matter so definitely beyond the field of medicine, John would most regretfully feel compelled to ask him to withdraw from the case. Deeming, scenting some marital infelicity, and anxious not to excite his patient further, held his peace.

After the first day in bed, it suddenly occurred to John to wonder if Margaret would not be surprised and chagrined at his failure to communicate with her regarding the costs of the Garment-Workers' Appeal. So he telephoned her from his bedside, telling her lightly of his indisposition and speaking with much mock indignation of the tyranny of her distinguished colleague, Deeming. He talked to her, in fact, much in the same vein as he spoke each day to Hilda, and he assured Margaret he would get in touch with her in a few days. She appeared deeply concerned, and seemed to harbor, for an instant, the idea of calling at his home to cheer him up. Then she suggested regretfully that she had never been so fortunate as to meet Mrs. Howard.

"My wife's in Florida," he had informed her, as though there were, therefore, no further obstacle. The idea of seeing her, even bedridden and ridiculous as he was, appealed to him.

But she had promptly answered: "Oh, if your wife's in Florida, of course I couldn't come."

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How absurdly conventional women were—even intelligent women!

"But you're a physician," he had urged. "Surely you're not a slave to all the ridiculous rules of dainty society ladies!"

She was not to be moved. He heard her laugh ripple pleasantly over the wire and her answer: "As a physician, I can't come, for sure. It would be positively unethical for me to call on Dr. Deeming's patient."

"As a labor leader, then," he suggested, "in search of a large and forthcoming contribution to your Union's treasury."

"Oh! I'll get that anyhow," she laughed. "And as a labor leader, I have to remember it's bad for a professional agitator to be seen too often with capitalists. My men will say you have bribed me to desert them."

He had to be content with her invitation to come to her office as soon as he was sufficiently recovered. His anxiety to be out of doors once more was definitely heightened by his wish to talk to her again.

He found occasion, upon one of Deeming's visits, to ask him casually whether he had ever heard of a certain woman physician, named Margaret Gilmor. "She called at my office on the day I first saw you, to ask an opinion regarding the legal aspects of some labor trouble." His air of unconcern was almost perfect.

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"An interesting woman she seemed. Do you happen to know her?"

"Know Margaret Gilmor? Well, I guess I do know her," Deeming had answered. "She was a pupil of mine at Hopkins, way back in—well never mind what year it was; we're both trying to forget it. And since she's graduated, every doctor knows her, and we are all more or less in love with her. That is, we want to kneel at her feet half the time, and the other half, shake her until her teeth chatter. She knows medicine. She could be a great scientist if she didn't fritter away her energies on stray human cats and dogs. But she does. She threw up a good practice in New York among rich feminine cranks, who won't consult brutal male physicians, just to come back here to treat measles and mumps in a God-forsaken hole downtown. And even there, if she'd only stick to medicine, it wouldn't be so bad. She is a splendid clinician, and there's lots of material in her section of the city. But she has some idea about being a ministering neighborhood angel. It gets her into all kinds of trouble. Just now, it's a garment-workers' lock-out. Last year, it was infant mortality. Next year—woman's suffrage, maybe."

John smiled. "I gather you don't approve of the new fads and fancies," he suggested.

"I neither approve nor disapprove," the doctor answered austerely. "In my opinion, a scientist has no

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concern with such matters. Life, at the best, is short enough for anyone who wants to make some real advance in medicine. And the passions aroused by controversy, besides wasting time, have a tendency, I believe, to unfit one for research. I always point out Margaret Gilmor to my wife as an argument against women in medicine. She's got all the equipment one could ask: brains, skill, training and a charming personality. Yet, because she's a woman, she's emotionally unfit to make the most of them. She spends her time doing the things a country doctor could do—if not quite as well as she can—at least, well enough. It would have been better for her if she'd married and spent her time fussing over her own babies, instead of those of dirty Poles and Lithuanians."

"Do you tell her that?" John asked, as the doctor made ready to go.

"Bless my soul, I tell her that every time I see her," Deeming said, smiling. "She laughs at me for my pains. Every week or so she drags me down town to look at some street beggar with a bad heart, a fellow not worth a penny to himself or to anyone else. I never get paid for these expeditions; neither does she. I go because she makes me."

"Where did she get money enough to indulge these fancies?" John inquired, still detaining Deeming.

"Oh, I don't know," the doctor replied. "She hasn't any money. Not what you'd call any,—or I,

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either, for that matter, though my standards are a million times more modest than yours. She's got just enough to live on, living where and how she does. Then her patients pay her now and then, when they feel like it. You'd better cultivate her acquaintance, if she'll let you. She's worth the trouble and the expense. You'll find it an expense. You'll be supporting fifty or a hundred children pretty soon, if you see much of her. But it's a pleasant way of wasting your money. If she asks you to dinner some night, in the odd little home she's rigged up on Albemarle Street, you'll decide your evening was worth all it cost."

"I shall have to see her again about this question of law she asked me," John said craftily. "I shall tell her I bear your recommendation."

"I shall brag to her myself, sir," Deeming answered in high good humor at the great man's condescension, "of having you for a patient. I shall whisper to her how hard I find it to manage you, and tell her she may have part of my fee if she will undertake to subdue you."

"Good!" John assented, dismissing him. "I shall regard her as part of my medical retinue. You shall treat my body, and she my soul. Between the two of you, no doubt, I shall rapidly grow reconciled to death."

VI

As John, on his way to call on Margaret, looked out from the window of his limousine, he experienced a sense of surprise at the unfamiliarity of the section of the city in which he found himself. He thought he knew his city as few men knew it. Its resources, its possibilities, its political conditions, its transportation facilities—all these features of its life were at his finger tips; but after his machine had left the business district to the west of him, it seemed to him as though he were in another town—a foreign one. He was aware of a social life overflowing out upon the sidewalks, as if the houses were too small to care for all the inhabitants of the neighborhood. Although it was a bright, sharp winter morning, little children seemed to make a playground of the streets, and several times the chauffeur stopped the car with a sudden jerk, barely avoiding injury to some venturesome dark-hued youngster. Most of the men were swarthy and heavily bearded, and when John could overhear their words, the accents were of a language unfamiliar to him. He found it all, even the cobble-paved street over which his motor car jogged, painfully squalid, but strikingly picturesque. There seemed more of color and life here than in other sections of Baltimore—less of restraint. The men and women spoke more excit-

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edly,—gesticulated more freely. At the hour when they should have been at work, the streets seemed crowded with idlers. They gathered here and there in little knots, apparently engaged in violent discussion. Then John remembered the great lock-out in the garment industry, and realized that the working activities of these people were paralyzed. His automobile, passing slowly down Albemarle Street, finally came to a deliberate stop in front of a little building, whose very exterior formed a striking contrast to its neighbors. Girt about with tall, gaunt structures apparently teeming with tenement dwellers, this little house was low in height, and trim—almost dainty—in its outlines. Amid the unkempt houses on all sides, shrieking for repairs and for the vigorous efforts of carpenter, tinner and glazier, this dwelling was characterized by a neatness almost bordering on affectation. Its windows were not only brilliantly transparent, but were shaded by soft, white hangings; its walls were arrogant in their array of warm, red paint, apparently of recent application. Its door steps were spotlessly clean, and most miraculous of all, there was at the side of the house a little patch of lawn—covered, it was true, at this season of the year, with last week's snow, but absolutely innocent of tin cans or any other form of rubbish. The entire place had an atmosphere of its own. It was an oasis in the midst of this desert of congestion, dirt and ugliness. On a tiny

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brass plate at the side of the door were the words "Dr. Gilmor."

The chauffeur assisted John to alight, and drove off to await him around the corner. It was impossible for the big automobile to stand in this narrow thoroughfare without blocking the progress of the street cars which rumbled past at frequent intervals.

John slowly ascended the steps and rang the door bell. A little maid, whose immaculate attire bore a curious resemblance to the appearance of the house itself, ushered him into a crowded reception-room. He bade her tell her mistress Mr. Howard had called, but that he preferred to see her after she had disposed of all her patients. Then he seated himself among the others who were awaiting their opportunity to enter Margaret's consultation-room.

The room in which he sat waiting, for considerably over an hour, was, like the rest of this odd house, beautiful in its simplicity. Its walls were blue and its wood-work white. Excellent reprints of celebrated paintings were hung here and there. On the table there was a great vase filled with fragrant, deep red sweet-peas.

John speedily became acutely conscious of the need for their fragrance. The inhabitants of the room were in painful contrast to their dainty surroundings. In one corner an old man, with a long, gray beard, coughed again and again, in paroxysms

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which seemed to tear his very soul. Near him sat a dejected, shapeless woman whose only redeeming features were her great, dark, pathetic eyes. She held in her lap a pale, scrawny, little baby, who now and then broke into a feeble wail, only to be hushed by its mother's low crooning of words John could not comprehend, set to a cadence not melodious, but nevertheless somehow beautiful in its mournful minor key. There were other women too, all devoid of grace and charm—slatternly, seemingly without energy or hope, and there were children—so many children!—each with some sign to show its exclusion from happy rosy childhood. There was a faint, sickening, malodorous atmosphere pervading the room. John knew he ought to be swept away by the pathos of the situation, but try as he would, he could not conquer a fastidious repugnance to these unwashed creatures. They were in misery because they were stupid. He was sorry they could not be happy, but his mind revolted at the idea of a world halting in its progress to give them opportunity to regain their places in its ranks.

After the waiting-room had been slowly emptied, John found himself at last in Margaret's office—a spotless, business-like room, all made up of white tiles and medical appliances. She seemed unaffectedly glad at his presence, and with more happy anticipations than he had known since the hour of his first interview with

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Deeming, he settled himself comfortably for a long talk.

"You've fitted up a charming little harbor, here, Margaret," he began. "If anything, isn't it a bit too dainty for your patients?"

"It's part of the game," she informed him. "I try to make it everything they haven't at home. I want them to hunger for pretty things like mine. When they want them enough, maybe they'll get them. Maybe!—" she repeated doubtfully.

He nodded in token of comprehension. Then he asked: "Are you busy? I want to talk to you endlessly this morning about 'ships and shoes and sealing wax and cabbages and kings.' Since I've quit work, I can't imagine anyone else having anything really important to do."

She smiled cordially. "I'm not too busy to talk to you as long as you want me," she assured him. "I have my calls to make, but they'll do any time during the day. But first tell me, are you all right again?"

He waved aside her question with half serious disdain. "Don't let's waste time talking about my abominable body. That's Deeming's job, and he is handling it badly enough. I've decided to employ you as an auxiliary doctor. I want what might be called conversational X-ray treatment."

"Yes?" she said interrogatively. "I realize you've said something clever, but I don't quite understand it.

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We poor women, you know, have no sense of humor at all. Be merciful and explain."

"I really have a meaning," he answered. "Therefore, what I said wasn't clever. I need, through you, to see what's on the inside of things—things which to me are impenetrable. You seem to have found a method. At least, it works for yourself."

"Sometimes," she corrected. "However, let's try! Only remember, what seems to me Gospel may seem to you fanaticism."

Her words recalled their stormy conversation at his office, and he hastened to deal with that memory.

"We said some harsh things to each other last week, Margaret. I suppose I wasn't exactly myself. You and I must never do that again. We're at a lasting peace now, aren't we?"

She smiled tremulously and was about to emphasize her own fault, but he would have none of it.

"We are through with misunderstanding each other," he insisted. "What's the use of talking about it? Ever since that morning I've been thinking of what you said about dying, and about the uselessness of my work."

She once more attempted a protest, but he promptly silenced her. "Don't let's be polite," he urged. "We'll never get anywhere that way. We can differ about things without liking each other any the less. Now here's a beginning point: To deal effectively with

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death one has to have some definite idea about life. You think all my work has been a feverish activity regarding externals, and I'm coming to believe you're right. The only trouble is I think the same of your work and most everyone else's. That's not mere petty pique. I'm trying to get at the kernel of things. I'd be perfectly willing, for the last days of my pilgrimage, to try philanthropy or social service, or selling all I have and giving it to the poor, or even socialism, if I could see the logic of any of them. Now you apparently have some scheme of living. You seem somehow serene. Will you tell me how you reached this state?"

"Very gladly," she answered, "but you must remember I'm a woman. I live on my emotions. I don't try to stifle them. I cultivate them, and water them, and give them light and air. They seem to me deliciously feminine, and I revel in being feminine. It disconcerts all my dear friends, who growl about women in the professions, merely to see me pour tea."

She laughed softly—a rippling, pleasant laugh. John's eyes indicated rather too clearly that he also found her exceedingly feminine. But when her laugh ended, she did full justice to the gravity of his question.

"You speak of logic. I think that's where we lack a common ground. Life, it seems to me, must of necessity lack logic. The growth of a tree is not logical. Its branches strike off—here and there, apparently at

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haphazard. But it's beautiful—useful too, don't you think? ”

“ I find your life beautiful this morning,” he said quietly, but with such earnestness, that the color came into her cheeks. He seemed, however, delicately anxious to cause her no embarrassment, and after a minute, he continued: “ Beautiful, yes; useful too, perhaps, in a way, but as you yourself say, without logic. I'm afraid I must have logic. Why did you come down here? What was your idea? ”

“ Well,” she thought aloud, with a merry light in her eyes, “ there's nothing very original or unusual in it, is there? These days every angelic heroine of fact or popular fiction, failing in her pursuit of an elusive male, foists herself upon the long-suffering poor. Perhaps it's a subtle form of revenge. This country is swarming with well-meaning men and women, who feel a holy call to become missionaries in their own city. Maybe,” she struck in, smiling once more, “ they realize subconsciously they can make the sorrows of poverty unendurable, and thus bring them to an end one way or the other.”

He laughed reproachfully. “ You said you had no sense of humor. You aren't following the lines in your own comedy.”

“ Ah, but I have no logic, either,” she retorted gaily. “ You can't expect me to play the same rôle all morning.”

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"I'm afraid you're incorrigible," he admitted. "Well, did you, too, feel this holy call to make misery more miserable?"

"Not exactly," she explained. "I think I wanted most to become a missionary to the missionaries. Now don't smile," she ordered. "I'm being serious now. I've gone back to the first character in my repertoire. After I graduated from the medical school here at Johns Hopkins, I went to New York. I practised among rich women. Most of them felt an impulse to do something for the poor. Something that wasn't much trouble; not much to themselves, I mean. I always felt sure the submerged class must find it amazingly troublesome. Well, it exasperated me. Gradually I came to feel what the poor really needed was the same efficient service the rich can buy. I felt it vaguely, not very clearly; so I talked about it a great deal more than if my ideas had been really straight in my own mind.

"Now, there's only one kind of work I'm really trained to do properly. That's medicine. It seemed to me it would be sensible, instead of giving tenement people lectures on Botticelli, to give them decent medical treatment. Maybe if they saw they were getting that, they'd be interested to learn what sort of mental and moral food appealed to a doctor who had sense and skill enough to care for their bodies. It would be interesting, too. These people have bones

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and muscles and organs curiously like those of your friends uptown; and when they send for a doctor, it's usually because they need one. I rode this hobby ruthlessly whenever I talked to a wealthy patient who would listen to me. I was less feminine in those days." She smiled at him again, archly. "I'm afraid," she laughed, "I rode the hobby astride.

"Well, to continue this autobiography, I had one patient who was very old, very fat and disgustingly benevolent. I had treated her with much profit for some twenty or so ailments. She made her own diagnosis each time, and a cure generally resulted when her particular disease went out of fashion. She preferred to be on the point of death on the second and last Wednesdays of each month. She had a real genius for tantalizing her heirs. Her imagination was so vivid that she finally succeeded in deluding her own self into believing I had miraculously prolonged her life. I couldn't convince her to the contrary. She took all my tirades anent medical service among the poor with absolute seriousness—the way I take them myself sometimes. One day she asked me why I didn't practice what I preached. I was compelled to explain my dependence upon ladies like herself for food and such unbecoming attire as I wear. Why don't you say it isn't unbecoming? That was your cue!

"She wanted to know if I'd do this work if I could afford it. I assured her passionately of my sincerity.

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I could do that without much soul-searching. I was full of cheerful confidence in my never-ending poverty. I never could keep any money. Do you know," she interjected suddenly, "I never have saved up again at any one time, in all these years, as much as I had in the Eutaw Savings Bank that last winter you and I lived at the Hollins Street house?"

All the lightness of mood suddenly left them both, in the recollection of the day she had brought her bank-book to him, and he had refused with such tenderness to take her money. He looked at her wistfully, with so many memories and regrets, that she was filled with remorse for having blundered upon this dangerous subject.

"I hurt you very cruelly that winter, didn't I, Margaret?" he said slowly. "I always wanted to explain——"

"Don't try it to-day!" she interrupted quickly.

"But when," he demanded, "will you let me talk to you of those days, Margaret? It is right—it is necessary—for both of us to understand, before it's too late."

"Some other time," she murmured, "not now. I was telling you about myself; this silly old woman took me at my word. She told me she would leave me, at her death, enough money to try my experiment, and she did. She willed me an annuity. You'd think it a trifle, but it's plenty for me. She was cunning enough

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to arrange it so it will always be paid to me in monthly instalments. I can't get my hands on much at any one time. If I could, the whole principal would be gone in six months. Then I came home to put my scheme into effect. I thought I'd like to do it in my own city. I've been at the work now for six years. I like it. I wouldn't give it up for anything. It's good, hard work, and it's fun."

"Why do you find it fun?" he inquired, trying to pierce to the heart of her attitude toward life.

"For one thing," she was prompt to say, "I'm doing work in a virgin field. These people won't go to the hospitals in time, and their medical conditions have been unspeakable. They used to fall into the hands of untrained blunderers and charlatans. The treatment they get from me is unique. I can see results,—and for another thing, I have gained a real authority in the neighborhood. They like me. They usually obey my most arbitrary orders. You ought to understand why I find that fun. I'm the John Howard of Albemarle Street," she finished demurely.

Her smile did not deflect him from his questioning. "Ah," he exclaimed eagerly and with a touch of triumph in his voice, "it's power, then, you enjoy! You are moved by just the same motive as the rest of us?"

"Yes, and no," was her guarded admission. "If I said I didn't enjoy power, you'd know I wasn't human, or wasn't telling the truth. The issue between

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us is clear. You have treated power as an end in itself. For me, I think, it has only been a means to an end."

"To what end?" was his next query.

"Why, to be of service; to relieve suffering; to make men and women happier." It seemed perfectly clear to her. Evidently it was more complex to him.

"Now we're getting to the root of the problem," was his puzzled comment. "You help others to be more comfortable—happier—so that they may do, what?"

She, in her turn, twisted his question over and over in her mind. Finally she said: "Isn't it enough to know they are happier?"

"No," he argued, "it brings you straight back to your beginning point. You're simply spreading your usefulness out thin, by giving it to others instead of concentrating it upon yourself. If I spend my life making myself comfortable and doing what interests me, you say I'm selfish and my time is misspent; but if you help others to make themselves comfortable and do what interests them, you've done by proxy precisely the same thing. Only by doing the job for oneself it gets done more thoroughly. I did it thoroughly!

"Now I haven't said this to be critical. I really want to know. I can't understand the validity of your theory, unless you're willing to admit happiness to be

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an end in itself, and other people's happiness to be virtuous and important, while our own is negligible and utterly sinful."

She looked at him blankly for a few minutes. Then she gave it up with a laugh.

"You're a very clever lawyer," she said, "and I'm only a doctor, and a woman doctor at that. I can't debate with you. At college, I didn't work off my conditions in logic until the month I graduated. But somehow I'm sure you're wrong. It's proved by your unhappiness to-day. There's a quality in serving others, which is above mere reason." She broke off suddenly and began again. "You haven't any religion, have you, John?"

"Not in the dogmatic sense," he replied. "I believe in some great force outside of ourselves. I believe I'm a manifestation of that force."

She nodded understandingly. "That's part of a religion," she agreed, "but don't you believe the force you speak of includes any of the attributes of love?"

He pondered over her question before answering.

"I see no ground for thinking so," he finally decided.

"Then I don't see how either of us is going to adopt the other's viewpoint. It's a pity you haven't more religion. Even if it's purely home-made, it makes things easy."

"Dying, you think?" was his query.

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"Dying more than anything else," she responded.

"Do you think it's sincere at the very end?" he persisted. "Don't they falter and wonder if they haven't been deluded, after all?"

"Not often," she continued to assert. "I've watched it thousands of times. And you've put me in mind of the very thing I've been groping around to tell you. The secret of happy living and triumphant dying is an enthusiasm—an enthusiasm stronger than the fear of death. Any kind will do, if you can fill yourself full of it. With some it's religion; with some it's socialism—trade unionism—patriotism—family love—sex love. Think of the myriads of foolish things martyrs have lived and died for—happy that the opportunity came to them. It's got nothing to do with logic. Your mistake was in thinking men and women can live on dry theories. You forgot we are a bundle of emotions. Your enthusiasm, so far as you had one, was for commercial power, but it was a product of your wonderful brain. Its grip on you was almost altogether mental and, therefore, it wasn't strong enough. If it had been, it would have carried you through to the end. It didn't. Now you've got to get another."

He sat there, weighing her words thoughtfully—so thoughtfully, that presently she felt impelled to rouse him from his deep study.

"You see," she resumed lightly, "I'm giving you

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an index to my own mind. I began by saying I couldn't answer your question, so I now proceed to instruct you instead. I think I make my life easy by trying to teach the things I'd otherwise have to learn."

"But you're happy," he reflected. "At least, you're not actively unhappy, are you?"

"No," she said, becoming thoughtful in her turn. "I believe I'm unusually happy. Of course, I know my life isn't a normal one. I told you I'm feminine. If you'll swear never to tell a soul, particularly Dr. Deeming, I'll confess to feeling, in my heart, no woman ought to do such work as mine, unless she can't have a home and children of her own. At best, it's merely an acceptable substitute. But," she added, shaking off her sombreness, "if I had a home, husband and children, no doubt I'd be mad to throw them all aside and run off to a labor meeting."

He felt sure he knew the thought—the intimate thought—which lay beneath her rather forced gaiety. It was his opportunity to approach once more the subject of his conduct of a score of years before. But she was too quick for him. Perhaps she read his intention. Anyhow, she suggested hurriedly, "Talking of labor meetings, there's to be one at the union headquarters this noon. Wouldn't you like me to take you?"

"Not to-day," he replied, "next time. To-day, I haven't time. I'm going from here to employ Russell

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to take charge of your celebrated case. I want to go over the record with him. I can give him some valuable hints, and anyhow, I've wasted enough of your time for this session. Only before I go I'd like to ask you one thing more. You think I need an enthusiasm—no matter what, if it is stronger than death itself. That sounds sensible to me, except that such emotions are not found merely because one needs them. Can't you suggest any?"

"‘Therein the patient must minister unto himself,’" she quoted. "Now tell me, wouldn't you feel as silly dressed up in one of my enthusiasms, as in one of my skirts?"

As he rose to go, he looked full into her laughing, yet kind and intelligent eyes.

"I could develop an enthusiasm for you, Margaret, if you'd let me," he declared, without a smile. "I don't even believe it needs developing."

For a perceptible space of time, she stood silent and rigid. What she might be thinking—whether she was angry or sorrowful, he could not guess. Then she relaxed once more into her pleasant smile.

"I'm forty, John!" she announced with mock despair, "forty! Old enough to kill any man's enthusiasm. Old enough to have a daughter of the precise age I was when you first knew me. Begin with a younger enthusiasm, and come here again to tell me of it!"

VII

DURING the few weeks following, John allowed himself to drift into the pleasant habit of a daily call at the Albemarle Street office. At first he came primed with plausible pretences. There were little questions regarding the appeal he found advisable to discuss with her, although she noticed he always decided what should be done without much reference to her views. Later, he ceased to make any excuses whatsoever. He wanted to see her. She never failed to give him a hearty welcome. It was enough. He wondered at his own blindness in having allowed all these years to slip past without having made some effort to find out what had become of her. He did not stop to think how little she would have attracted him, or he himself proved acceptable to her, during the days of his troubled reign.

Meanwhile, the preparation of the appeal went badly. Russell, somewhat astonished at John's interest in a case of this character, but stimulated by the size of his retaining fee, bent to his task in a workmanlike fashion, but he was frankly hopeless of success. The question involved was at best a doubtful one. The awkward Schwartzman, in trying the case in the court below, had unfailingly done each thing he should not have done, and left undone each thing he should have

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attempted. Therefore, the record was encumbered with a host of petty legal obstacles, which seemed to obscure completely the main issue. It would require a brief, and an argument marked by a masterly gift for emphasizing the essentials, and brushing aside the débris of the case, merely to present the principal question to the court. Russell even took the trouble to write a letter to John, setting forth his views and expressing a willingness at any time to withdraw from his employment. He desired to exclude any possibility of being criticised for having permitted the indulgence of a false confidence. John was disgusted. That was no spirit in which to enter a case. Yet there was no one more suitable for the task. Cushing was too young. He could perhaps argue the appeal better than Russell, but John felt sure a position as radical as the one contended for would find favor more readily if presented by an advocate of known conservatism and commercial importance. Russell had such a reputation and was, besides, a sane, well-seasoned lawyer. In John's opinion, he was devoid of imagination, but he was forced to accept him for lack of someone more available.

Things were at this pass, one bleak February morning, when John's motor car drew up at the Albemarle Street door. He was surprised to meet Margaret herself, dressed for the street, and about to leave her office, in apparent haste.

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"I must rush away without stopping this morning," she informed him hurriedly. "I've been 'phoned for. They need me at the Union headquarters. There's to be a big mass meeting."

"Let me go with you," he suggested.

She shook her head decisively. "Not this morning," she said. "I'm afraid there's trouble brewing. Besides, you oughtn't to walk so far, and in the present state of affairs, it would be better for anyone to stay away than to ride to the hall in a five-thousand-dollar car."

He promptly took her arm, and with a full measure of his old dominance, began to guide her steps northward toward Baltimore Street.

"If there's trouble in sight, you've no business there yourself," he observed. "Certainly you've no right to go there unprotected."

In spite of her anxiety, she looked up at him and laughed at his calm assurance of an ability to guard her from these neighbors she could manage so much better than any mere man.

"You men," was her saucy comment, "get a lot of happiness out of your recollections of the Middle Ages. Don't you? It's not that kind of trouble I'm worried about. The garment-workers won't hurt me—nor you, either, if you're with me. But something dreadful has happened this morning. Aaron Shapiro has deserted the Union. He's gone back to the Alpha

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factory to be foreman over the 'scabs.' I suppose you've never heard me talk about Shapiro, so you don't know why that should make much difference?"

He shook his head negatively, and she explained: "Shapiro was what you would call the executive secretary. He was the soul of the fight. It was he who collected the contributions from labor sympathizers and from out-of-town 'locals.' He doled out all the relief money. He had a genius for knowing which of our men had to have help, and which ones had brothers-in-law or cousins who could be bullied into caring for them. He encouraged the men and women to endure their sufferings. He had really developed the qualities of leadership. He had the whole situation at his fingertips. He speaks and writes English fluently, and with a rude sort of vigor."

"He wrote that advertisement which caused all the trouble, I presume?" John suggested dryly.

"Yes, he wrote that too, and spread it all over the country," she answered. "It did the work, didn't it? The employers themselves said in court it caused them a loss of over three hundred thousand dollars. Well, they've bought him. He's gone back. He's left his comrades to starve. I'm afraid the Union will collapse now, but what worries me most is that at the end the men may do something violent. Perhaps it will be to Shapiro; maybe to the factories or the 'scabs.' I'm on my way to stop them if I can. Now you see I'm

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in no danger, so you'd better go back to your car. It will be exciting, and excitement is bad for you."

He didn't relish his rôle as a sheltered invalid, even though her words were full of solicitude for him and contained no hint of contempt.

"It won't excite me if you're in no danger," he informed her promptly. "You forget I don't share your feeling about the Union. For me your meeting will merely be the close of a long fight—selfish on both sides—a fight in which I happen not to be enlisted."

"Now, you're not going to be horrid when I'm so terribly bothered! If you can't help being cynical, don't tell me about it. These people are mine. I've looked after them when they were sick. I helped to bring their babies into the world. I can't see them rush into danger of prison or worse, without feeling serious about it."

He nodded and smiled gravely, to indicate his understanding.

"I'm not cynical," he told her. "If you felt any other way, you wouldn't be Margaret Gilmor. That would be a real calamity. But why must you meddle, as you do, every day, in these vulgar squabbles over a few miserable dollars? You say, yourself, medicine is the only thing you really are trained to know. It's one of the ugliest of the country's problems—this labor question—and yet you insist on rushing into the thick of it and taking sides, without any careful study of

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its complexities. If anyone began practising your art in this slipshod manner, you'd be the first to protest."

"I'll tell you, if you really want to know," she replied belligerently, "why I'm always meddling, as you put it, with labor troubles, and always on the side of the laborer, even when he's wrong, as he often is. It's just because I am a doctor. I tell these people they must eat better food and breathe fresh air and not sleep four or more in one room. I'm wasting my words, because they can't afford to do better. What's the use of giving them drugs? Even if I cure them, the same causes of their disease are there, waiting for the next chance. Food, air and housing all boil down to mere wages. I want them to have more wages, whether the industry can afford it or not. If it can't run without crippling men in such numbers, it should break down! What's industry for anyhow, if it isn't for men?"

The frosty air and Margaret's vehemence brought a glow into her cheeks. She made an attractive picture, as she paused on the street corner to conclude her declaration of the sacred rights of labor. There was no opportunity for John to point out the fallacies of her argument. They were now opposite the hall, and the sidewalk was congested with men and women, talking in loud, angry tones. They were of many races, creeds and tongues, and in spite of their poverty, the costumes of the women were full of contrasts of gaudy

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colors, lending a harsh vividness to their appearance. Most of them were American-born sons and daughters of foreign parents, but there were many Jews and Italians, who appeared to have lived only a few years in America. There was also a sprinkling of Poles, Lithuanians, and Americans of native-born stock in the throng. Many of the workers spoke to Margaret as she passed, indicating in their words and manner how confidently they counted her as one of themselves. Several times her progress was intercepted by troubled-looking men, who asked what could be done in this crisis, or suggested timidly their fears of some serious disturbance. As she and John paused in the narrow doorway leading into the assembly hall, they overheard a fierce, violent sentence, spoken in a language unknown to John, by a short, sallow man, with burning, excited eyes. John caught only the word "Shapiro" and an expression of coarse blasphemy, evidently a common factor in all dialects. Instinctively he attempted to draw Margaret aside, but she went straight up to the speaker and addressed him in his own tongue, gently and in apparent entreaty. John noticed the beautiful music of her voice, more perceptibly than he would, had he been able to comprehend her words.

"What language were you speaking?" he asked eagerly, as the man turned away silenced, but evidently not satisfied, "and what did you tell him?"

"It was Yiddish," she answered. "I begged him

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to try to think of Shapiro less bitterly. What he did was base and treacherous, of course, but the poor fellow has a wife who is going to die, I'm afraid, and a new little son, who will die, too, unless we can save the mother. I suppose he felt he just had to have some money. I thought maybe these people didn't know."

"Did he answer you?" John demanded.

"No," she told him, "but I heard him mutter, as he went off, that he had a wife and babies, too. It looks bad."

When John and Margaret seated themselves in the long, low-ceilinged hall of the squat, ugly building, the most unpracticed eye could have detected how ominous the situation did seem. The room was blue with the smoke of cheap, rank tobacco, and within a minute or two after their entrance, it was filled almost to the point of suffocation by a dense host of the laborers and their wives and friends. It wasn't a real Union meeting, Margaret explained. It was in the nature of a neighborhood mass meeting.

John feared he might find it impossible to understand the dialects of the speakers, but Margaret reassured him. English would predominate. Nearly all of them who came to meetings understood it, even if they spoke it imperfectly. It was only those few who could speak nothing but their native tongue, who might make use of foreign languages. She herself always used English in talking to these large polyglot gather-

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ings, though she was able to make herself understood in Yiddish or Italian. More of them, she had found, could comprehend her meaning, than if she used another language. She had discovered, when addressing a meeting in Yiddish or Italian, while one group would understand her perfectly, most of the others in the audience would gather no idea at all of what she was saying.

As they looked about the hall, they noted an entire absence of smiles or laughter. The men seemed to be feverishly excited, yet quiet, with that fierce, ugly inaction which forebodes a coming storm. The few whispers which could be overheard were of bitter hatred of the renegade Shapiro. For the time, all enmity against the factory owners seemed to be drowned in their fury against the man who had led them on, only to betray them at the end.

The meeting began formally when a venerable old man, whose white beard reached far down upon his breast, arose and spoke long and sorrowfully. He talked Yiddish and apparently a large proportion of his audience failed completely to understand him. Here and there some swarthy interpreter would explain in broken English to a group of non-Jewish neighbors, the burden of his discourse. Not that it was really necessary. He was telling one of the oldest and saddest stories known to man. How they had come to love this brilliant youth and to follow him; how the

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path he pointed out was a road of suffering and despair; how many of them had seen dear ones sink down and die by the wayside, but under his inspiration, had dried their tears and rejoined the ranks; he spoke, too, of their trust in him; of their willingness to let him think and act for them, so that now they hardly knew their own plan of campaign. Then, with sobs in his voice, he told them of their leader's treachery, his abandonment of them to their doom; his indifference to their fate, now that he had escaped the dangers which only yesterday he had commanded them to endure without flinching.

When he sat down, many of the audience were in tears. John himself, somewhat of a fastidious connoisseur of speech, and able to understand only such words as were of German origin, fell unwillingly under the spell of the pathetic old man and his wailing story of dissolution and despair. The squalor, the disorder, and above all, the dirt and stench in the crowded room were grossly repellent to him, but here somehow was poetry, clad in hideous unkempt rags, and he had no choice but to pay it tribute.

The next speaker was an Italian, whose sentences came in short, violent bursts like stiletto stabs. The note of pathos was less apparent here. His emphasis was one of blind fury. The word "*traditore*" was repeated again and again, and though few understood his speech, everyone knew he was calling down upon

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the perjured deserter the vengeance of an outraged heaven.

The next man to rise was an American—a long, thin man, with a keen, hatchet face. He spoke briefly and with hard, practical common-sense. This fellow Shapiro had played them a dirty trick. There was no doubt about that. But there was also no use in crying over spilled milk. They'd had a winter worse than any he could remember in all his years. This blow, coming now, was the last straw. They—including himself, he admitted good-humoredly—had been fools enough to let Shapiro take charge of everything. It was impossible to go on with the fight now. It would have ended soon, even if Shapiro had stuck to his guns. He finished his speech by moving that the men be allowed to go back to work as individuals and no longer as members of the Union, if the employers would take them.

“If any man's got a better idea,” he concluded, “I'm willing to take my chance with him. I can stand punishment as long as any other man. I've got no wife and kids like most of you. But I can't see how you're going to get anywhere by sticking out any longer. The scabs are learning our jobs. Soon we won't, any of us, get them, even when we ask.”

He sat down, and dead silence followed. He had said what all of them knew, but hated to admit. Finally, in halting English, a Pole seconded the motion. John

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turned to glance at Margaret. She was pale and her lips were tightly compressed. She was suffering real pain. She had made this Union's cause her own, and now it lay dying before her eyes.

Suddenly, however, before a vote could be taken, a young man sprang upon the platform. He did not seem to belong among this throng. He bore no marks of famine or privation. Margaret whispered to John how sorry she was to see him. His name was Lormer, and if he had any permanent home, it was in New York. He was an American by birth, though his parents were foreign, and he gloried in being known everywhere as a fire-brand. He believed passionately in the rights of the poor as against those of the rich, and young as he was, had more than once tasted prison fare for preaching and living the doctrine of revolt. Wherever there was industrial strife, he was to be found, teaching the dogma of rebellion by force. His restless energy might have brought him fame and wealth, if he would have put it into harness, but such as his views were, he clung to them with the fervor and self-sacrifice of a religious martyr.

He was greeted with a thunder of applause, but he held up his hand for silence.

"Fellow slaves of the tyrants of Capital," he called in his strident, penetrating voice, "what's all this surprise about? Because you've lost your fight? Because your masters have bought back one of their fugitive

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slaves? You might have known what was going to happen from the first. What fools you are to let your masters choose the weapons you must fight them with. There is only one way you can get your rights. That's by taking them. There're more of us than of the bosses. That's why they shriek when you talk of fighting for your rights. Fighting's all right when they need you to snatch some money and land from a foreign country; then it's war and patriotism. If you want them for yourself, it's riot and murder. If you want your just dues from them, they tell you you must fight with money and law, because they're in the majority when you count money, and they make the law and own the courts. Look what they did to you with their law! Everyone of you who owns a home or a little bank account can hand it over to your boss. What does a slave want with a home?

“Oh, but you took an appeal, didn't you, to waste a little faster the few dollars left in your treasury. The eight judges of your Appeal Court are sitting on their bench laughing till their sides ache, while they wait to get hold of your appeal. Don't you see how you play into the hands of the men who use you to fill their money-bags, and to save themselves and their worthless, idle women from earning the bread you can't be sure of, even by working till you die? You have to plead for a chance to slave for them. It would be a

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joke, if you weren't starving, and if you hadn't let your little kids die.

"Well, your game's up for this time! Your Union's dead. Each of you can go back and beg for a job, so you can save up enough money to pay off the judgments against you. Next time, maybe, you'll get some sense and begin by using the weapons God gave you, instead of those provided by your bosses. But one thing you can do before you start off to ask for your place in the chain gang at the factories. You can give the capitalists a taste of the misery you've suffered. You can show them that even when you lose a fight, you can leave some scars. You can punish this damned traitor Shapiro so no one will ever play such a trick on you again. You can teach the scabs they can't come down here and steal honest men's bread, without some risk to their precious hides. You can do it all in one day, comrades, more than you did in all these weeks!"

He paused suddenly, and began again in a lower pitch: "Some of you may get hurt. Some of you may go to prison. I've been there. You're just as much in prison here, and all the time, as you would be in that big gray building along side of the Falls. As for hurts, a shot doesn't hurt as much as watching your child get sick and die because you can't feed it. You've been through hell, men! Let the others have a taste of it! I don't ask any man to take a

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risk I won't take. Let the women and the cowards sit still or go home. If there are any men here, let them get up and come with me!"

The hall seemed to rock with the stampede which followed. Men shied their approval and their willingness to be led. Hats were thrown into the air. Some women cried out in terror; others were urging on their men to vengeance.

Margaret, pale as a sheet, but taut with resolution, rapidly forced her way to the platform. John, completely forgotten by her, stood at its foot. She held up her hand for silence, but for once her power seemed lost. There were confused and discordant cries in many languages.

"It's a man's job," John heard Lormer's voice calling above the others. "Take the woman away!" A burly Lithuanian gently, but resistlessly, picked up Margaret bodily in his arms, and lifted her from the platform to the floor at John's side.

"Form in line outside!" Lormer's voice cried again.

"It's a man's job," John repeated to Margaret. He was suddenly caught in the grip of forces in which he himself did not for one minute believe. "He's right: it is a man's job! It's mine, by God!" It was a strange name for him to give to the "great force outside of ourselves," in which he had some doubtful faith, but he had no time to think of what was pass-

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ing in his mind. He sprang toward the platform. Margaret caught his arm and held him tightly.

"Keep still," she commanded, absolutely rough in her excitement and fear. "You'll kill yourself!"

He shook her off with an equal forgetfulness of niceties. "I don't care if I do! The fools! It's absurd! They shall do things *my* way. I'll show them who's master!"

A second later he was on the platform. An enormous ledger was lying on the table, and he lifted it aloft, parallel with the floor, and let it fall with a great, sudden crash. It sounded on the hollow flooring of the stage like the beat of a tremendous drum. For a second everyone stopped and turned, and in that second, John Howard—sometime master of capitalists, and now, without logic—determined on becoming master of mobs, sent his vibrant voice out into the hall.

"One minute!" he began. "I'll only keep you a minute! I come to you with a very important message."

Lormer made an effort to interrupt, but the presence of this tall, distinguished-looking man on the platform, bearing an important message, had whetted a curiosity in all the throng. A deep silence was enforced. John, struggling less against the crowd than to preserve some semblance of calm, so that his

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bosom enemy might not attack him, consciously strove to speak in quiet, conversational tones.

"When I came down town this morning," he went on, "I passed the Alpha factory. Do you know what was happening in their office?"

He paused again. Here and there the question was swiftly translated into another language. Then came breathless silence, and John's answer:

"The Board of Directors was praying you might do just what you're going to do—come uptown and start a riot! And they're praying the same prayer this morning at the Pioneer, and the Columbia, and the Patapsco. It's the one chance the factories have to win, and when I finish, you'll go straight out and make them a present of it. Talk about playing into their hands! Don't you suppose the stockholders are getting restless at seeing the factories lose money? They don't care how the lock-out ends; they want dividends. The directors are praying for something to end the trouble; a little riot—police—militia, maybe—and then the end. That's what always happens when you try violence. The big public—neither very rich nor very poor—forgets what the fight was about. It's against the man with the knife in his hand. It wants him punished. And what the big public wants, sooner or later it gets.

"You don't have to lose this fight—Shapiro or no Shapiro. If you can hold out till the Court of

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Appeals passes on your case, the lock-out will end—that is, if you gain the decision. The directors won't stand out against the Court's opinion. The stockholders won't let them. The public pressure will be too strong.

“Now all you have to do is to work along till then, and to win your case. Can you do it? No! You can't! Not by yourselves. But *I* can do both these things for you. Maybe you don't know me. My name's John Howard. You've heard of me. I have managed bigger things than this lock-out and managed them better than Shapiro—or Lormer, either. I can finance your Union if I have to. I've got all the money I need. But I'm a business man. I shall make you do your own share. And I can win your case. Maybe some other lawyer couldn't. I can; and I'm the man who's going to argue it. Perhaps you don't trust me, because I'm rich, but if I take this job, I shall work with Dr. Gilmor, whom you all do know and trust.

“Now make your choice! Lormer offers you failure and one day of smashing heads. I offer you success and a lifetime of better wages. Lormer wants to end your Union, and I want to save it. He wants to go to prison for you, and with you, while your wives sit home grieving, and maybe starving. I'm willing to win your case for you and bring you safe out of all your troubles. This is the minute for you

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to make up your minds. I made a success and a few odd millions by never giving any man the same opportunity twice. I shan't begin changing my rules with you. If you choose wrong, I'll save a lot of worry and a year's income. Go off with Lormer if you like! But you'll find I'm a man of my word. What I promise, I can do, and I will. And when I threaten, I never change my mind. If you go into this game with me, you'll play it my way—absolutely, all the time, and with no questions. You've got nothing to lose and everything to gain. I've got a reputation for doing my jobs right, and I got it by taking very little advice.

“Now then, you know what you can expect. If you don't want what I offer you, Mr. Lormer is waiting. His line forms, you remember, in the street—just outside the hall!”

VIII

JOHN'S punishment for his reckless violation of medical orders began before the cheering, which followed his speech, had died away. Amid the wave of exultation of the crowd, deliriously happy at finding the hour of defeat suddenly transformed into one of promised victory, there were not a few—more observant than their fellows—who noticed the strange behavior of Mr. Howard and the manner in which Dr. Gilmor and a few of her friends had, shortly afterward, assisted him to leave the hall.

As he lay, shattered and exhausted, on the couch in the little committee room, which opened off from the platform, he betrayed not the slightest sign of regret. The hideous pain was gone now, and he had not died, as Margaret had for one frenzied minute believed he would. He was, in spite of his utter collapse, triumphant.

Margaret blamed herself unsparingly for having allowed him to subject himself to this strain. She wondered greatly, in the intervals of ministering to him, at the strange elements in this man, who had, after all these years, been willing to risk his life in obedience to an emotion apparently at total variance with the whole trend of his prior thought and action.

But the most curious part of it all was still to be

revealed to her. As the ravages of his attack gradually became less evident, the impulse he had followed lost none of its strength. When he was sufficiently recovered, he gave Margaret the most precise orders for his care—in curious contrast to his former contempt for his safety. He told her to send a message for Thomas, who would still be waiting with the limousine near her office. He wished to be carefully assisted to his home. He would remain in bed an entire week. He would take no more risks.

“I’ve got a job on hand,” he told her, with a faint smile. “I’m not going to die till I’ve finished it to my satisfaction.”

She obeyed his commands without pausing to argue with him. There would be time enough for that in the future. Whatever might happen, he had, at least, averted a riot. It had been “a man’s job.” She understood more clearly the tremendous force of the man. As for his promises, she had not been sure, even while he was speaking, of his entire good faith. He had often explained to her in this past month his theory that a nice regard for scruples might often be more harmful than praiseworthy. But he appeared now to be taking his words with an absolute literalness. Of course, they were impossible of fulfillment. He would understand that clearly enough in a few hours. He would probably, by that time, care very little about carrying them into effect, even

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if he could. He had the best of excuses to offer. If he still felt an interest in his brilliant achievement of the morning, he could balance his account with a substantial check.

Therefore, she was considerably surprised next morning, upon answering the ring of her telephone, to hear the voice of John Howard, still a little weak, but extremely business-like.

"Hello, Margaret," the words trickled over the wire in a thin stream. "This is I—John. Can you understand me?"

"I can," she promptly answered, "and I wonder at your imprudence. I am something in the nature of a physician. You will please hang up the receiver and keep still. I'll break my resolution, and come out to see you this afternoon."

"Good!" he exclaimed, "but I am keeping still. I'm lying flat in bed at this very minute. One of my nurses is holding the telephone to my mouth. Are you busy?"

"That depends," she replied. "If you want something you oughtn't to have, I'm too busy to attend to it, otherwise I'll find time."

"It's important," he insisted. "Make sure you get my exact meaning. I am sending Thomas down for you with the machine. He should reach your office in about thirty minutes. He will drive you to the banking house of Berg & Co. I've arranged with

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Berg to take care of us. He'll give you a bag full of currency. He knows Thomas, who will identify you. You will then be driven to the headquarters of the Union. Get hold of that little chap with the stubby mustache who helped me out of the hall yesterday; not the old chap with the beard! He's too soft for this job. I want the other one to be my paymaster."

Margaret's amazement grew greater and greater as she listened.

"I think you've developed a mental disorder," she exclaimed.

"If I have," he retorted gaily, "I caught it from your foreign friends, or maybe from Deeming. He's just left me, muttering incoherent gibberish. But to get back to business. Thomas will give you a list of everyone who's to get money and the exact amount each one should have. You tell this fellow who pays off, if he gives anyone more or less than my list calls for, he's got to produce a signed order from you. If he can't, I'll send him to the penitentiary. That's all for to-day."

Margaret caught her breath. "Did all this have to be done to-day?" she inquired sharply. "Couldn't you have waited till you got some strength?"

"I'm not taxing myself," he assured her, "and it couldn't wait. A dollar to-day, before it's expected, will look bigger than five, after they've begun to clamor. And men are more efficient on full bellies.

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This week they eat at my expense. Next week everyone who eats is going to earn part of the price of his food."

"Where did you get your list?" she asked. "How do you know it's right?"

She could hear his triumphant chuckle. "Shapiro made it out for me last night. He had memoranda at his home, but don't you tell anyone he's been to see me."

"Oh John!" Margaret exclaimed reproachfully. "How could you?"

"Why not?" he demanded lightly. "He's a staple commodity, with a fixed price. The Alpha people bought him at one figure. I bought his leisure time at a higher one. I could have had all of him, but he wouldn't be any good to me in the open. Besides, I like him to take some of the other crowd's money and to tell me what's going on in their camp. He's an interesting devil, and an observant one. I enjoyed him a lot last night. I'll tell you about it when I see you this afternoon. Don't forget you promised to come!"

She did come to his home at Roland Park, not only that afternoon, but several times thereafter, before he was released from his imprisonment. Each day he was full of plans for the conduct of the lock-out. He would lie in bed, in perfect and uncomplaining obedience to Deeming's commands, in all respects, except that he kept the telephone wires hot with com-

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mands, and he was in daily consultation with men he sent for to take charge of one detail or another. Margaret herself was constantly being pressed into service. Curiously enough, to her mind, he used very few of the garment workers in carrying out his plans. His men were native Americans, obeying his orders most unsentimentally for an ample cash consideration.

One afternoon, about a week after the mass-meeting, when John was again well enough to be sitting up in a Morris chair in his room, Margaret came to his home, determined to put an end, once and for all, to this dangerous activity. She pulled off her gloves deliberately, sat down and faced him.

"Now look here, John," she began, in her vigorous manner. "I've let you alone all week, because I thought it would do you more harm to be argued with, than to have your own way. But now you're better, and can listen to reason. I want to know what you're trying to do and to force you to stop doing it. Deeming's been 'phoning me every day to urge me to control you. He imagines I can. Now what about it?"

John smiled at her tolerantly. "You heard what I was going to do that morning at the Union headquarters. I'm going to argue that appeal and win it. I'm also going to keep the Union alive until the Court hands down its opinion. It's simple, isn't it?"

"It's simple madness," she answered. "If you want to give money to the Union, there's no harm in

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that. It's your money, and you've enough of it to please yourself. But as for the appeal, you can see how impossible your idea is. And it's the same about managing the lock-out. Every time you let yourself get excited, you get into trouble."

He nodded. "But I'm not going to get excited again until the argument at Annapolis," he explained. "I don't intend meeting your volatile friends any more. I'm going calmly to outline policies to my very competent assistants, who will care for the ways and means, and treat the whole matter as though it were an ordinary battle for some business advantage. I shall find some quiet place for my headquarters, on the edge of the business district, but outside of the strike area. No one but those in my confidence are to know its location. There I shall quietly receive reports and issue instructions. My plans are exceedingly few and direct. Trained advertising men are to prepare daily statements for the press of our side of the whole quarrel—temperate, convincing arguments, without any passion in them; not the sort of stuff a fellow like Shapiro would put out. There'll be no germs of future law-suits in them. The locked-out men and women are going to be put to work making souvenirs of the labor war,—little inexpensive articles, which we'll sell, by means of travelling men, to every Union sympathizer in the country, for five times what they're worth. That will pay some of the expenses,

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keep the men from getting into mischief, and help to keep alive the national sentiment against the factories our advertisements will create.

“And all the time I shall be quietly at headquarters, like a spider in the middle of its web. I shall rest methodically every day, according to Deeming’s directions, see no one till he has purged all the excitement from his message, and in a leisurely fashion prepare myself for the argument of the appeal.”

He wasn’t seeking approval of his scheme. He was merely sharing his ideas with her. In every sentence there was conveyed a fixed determination to proceed without hesitation, whether she acquiesced or not. Nevertheless, she could not abandon her duty of making some attempt to swerve him from his purpose.

“John,” she urged, “you’re usually the most clear-sighted of men. You aren’t the sort to delude yourself. Can’t you see the absolute impossibility of arguing that case? You saw it before—the first day you talked to Dr. Deeming.”

“Things are different now,” he said decisively.

“How different?” she repeated, compelled to frankness by his obstinacy. “They’re not better. You like to face facts; you’ve got to realize you can’t keep on having attacks like you have had, and getting back into your stride a week afterwards.”

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Her sorrowful face left no doubt of the full meaning behind her words.

He smiled at her, as though trying to console her for any unhappiness she might feel; as though he himself had no interest in the matter, except to spare her as much as he might.

"I'm not going to have another attack until the day of the argument," he stated confidently. "I shall take care of myself like a neurasthenic. I memorized every rule for guarding myself. When I argue the case, I shall expect a heart spasm. I imagine it will end things. I'm counting on it to do so. In all these years, I never have managed to reach the climax of any case without becoming, in secret, tremendously excited. That's my nature. Certainly it won't be different in a case like this; but it won't matter then. On the contrary, it will help. If I should die while making this plea, there will be an irresistible sentiment working on the emotions of the judges. Our case would be won before they entered their consultation room."

She stared at him as though she hardly grasped his meaning. He was using his own death as an integral factor in his schemes!

"John," she said, struggling desperately to preserve her composure and to save him any emotional fatigue. "What has happened to you? Why are you doing this thing? It's deliberate suicide!"

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"You ought to understand," he told her. "After all this search, I've chanced on an enthusiasm—'an enthusiasm stronger than the fear of death.' They were your own words. And it feels good. I've got something I can do. I don't think anyone else could do it, and it's all the bigger because dying at the end is a necessary part of it."

"But why," was her bewildered query, "should this particular thing move your enthusiasm? You don't care about these garment workers. You think they're in misery, because they're unfit. You've said so a thousand times. Why are you going to throw your life away for them?"

"I can't put it into words," he responded, with an odd light in his eyes. "It's not for them. It's for myself,—though I do care what becomes of them now, because I've made them my protégés. Some of it, I think, is just sheer joy of dying in a fair, hot fight, won by my own strength against heavy odds, in a battle where my untrained army would be crushed, were it not for me. And part of it is the happiness of putting one's death to an efficient use—not letting it be mere waste. And maybe, on the other hand, it's nothing better than a desire to feel and use my power down to the last second of consciousness. I don't know if I can make you see it, but somehow, it makes me really happy. I'm through with drifting. I feel I'm in command once more, not only of these

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men, but of fate itself. I can even force death to serve my will."

He paused before adding more gently. "Perhaps, Margaret, part of it is my desire, at the end of the journey, to stand side by side with you in my last fight."

She made a final desperate effort to blunt his purpose. If he were doing this thing for her sake, she would speedily kill the roots of his impulse.

"You shan't stand by my side," she said huskily, but with evident decision. "I won't do anything, now or hereafter, to encourage you. If you won't drop out of this fight, I shall. What you plan is positively immoral. My duty is to conserve life, not to destroy it."

"I should be sorry to see you quit in the middle of a battle, Margaret," was his grave reproof. "It doesn't sound like you. As for what I'm doing, it's what your inner soul approves. I appeal from the Doctor Gilmor of to-day to the Margaret of last month. It's the graduate of the Hopkins Medical School who has just spoken, not yourself. But even if you deserted me, I would go straight on with the work I've found to do. Nothing in life can stop me—nor death—not even you."

"Then you're not doing it partly because of me!" she exclaimed.

"You!" he repeated thoughtfully. "You're a

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composite creature to me, Margaret. As you sit there in my chair, or at your office, that's not all of you. Another Margaret is still in the dingy old dining-room on Hollins Street, seated in front of a coal stove, pouring tea, telling me I should some day put my power to use in serving men and women, too weak to help themselves. I didn't believe it was sense then. I don't with my mind believe it now. It was all a beautiful unreal dream, and I've been aching somehow over its beauty ever since. I had to spend my life the way I did. I wasn't made for sleep and dreaming. But at the end, I'd like to make believe, just for a minute, that it was all true."

Her lashes were suspiciously moist, as she raised her eyes to his.

"John," she pleaded, "once in those days you hurt me very cruelly. You went off to your work without a word to tell me why you left me, and yet you knew I loved you. I was too proud then to ask you not to go. I'm not too proud now. Don't throw your life away! If I ever said anything else to you, I was wrong. What can we know of the great issues of right and wrong? All we can be sure of is simple, warm, human affection. I want you to stay! You won't fail me a second time, John?"

He raised her hand reverently to his lips. Then he faced her gravely.

"Margaret," he said, "when I went away from

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you that night, I did it because I suddenly discovered it was my destiny to hew my way through life giving wounds to everyone who stood in my path. I knew my mode of life would make you miserable. I knew your distress would spoil my work, and I chose that both of us should suffer the one swift pang, rather than long years of misunderstanding and disillusionment. Never before, or afterward, have I suffered as I did the night I bade you that curt good-bye. I knew what you were enduring too. And to-day, after all these years, when I am done for and ready to die, I have no choice but to deny again what you ask of me. I must follow the force that has always driven me on, and will drive me on to the end. Yet I loved you then, Margaret. I love you now."

"You didn't love me then," she said softly. "You believed you did; you've thought so all these years. But I wasn't the thing you loved. I was part of your egotism, a feminine trophy of your tremendous force—pleasant to walk with, charming to talk with, pleasing, too, to look upon. I *was* pretty when I was nineteen, before I grew tired and old and careworn—wasn't I, John?"

She seemed, in all her distress over his grim purpose and her own dead youth, to smile sadly at the memory of the winsome girl, who was once herself

"No," he surprised her by answering sharply,—adding, as she looked up. "You were beautiful—no

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pretty. But to-day, you have all that beauty and more; you have added all that strength of purpose and courage of heart can give to a face which was lovely, even without them."

"John, John," she answered, with no effort to conceal her happiness in his praise. "You speak of my soul and forget my wrinkles; the boy of twenty-four wouldn't find me pretty as I am to-day. It's the man of forty-five who can still discover my faded charms."

"It's not true," he insisted stoutly, "but if it were, what matter, since I'm forty-five, and no longer twenty-four? If you were to-day the unfledged, untried girl of nineteen, I should miss in your face what I love to see there now. I love you, Margaret, and you know it!"

"Then why don't you do what I ask?" she pleaded, returning to her theme.

"If I could," he replied gently, "I wouldn't be John Howard. If you care for me, you don't want the affection of a strange man. I couldn't last long, anyhow. You know that. Help me to pour into these last six weeks of life enough of happiness and purpose to make up for all we've missed, and help me, without repining, to end them with a great triumph."

A silence fell between them.

"Will you do it?" he demanded, suddenly looking full into her eyes. She hesitated, moved in the

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same instant with solemn happiness and poignant grief. She was sure the love she had cherished all these long years was fully returned, only to know of its brief span. Her heart sang with joy, even while her eyes filled with tears.

“ I’ll do it,” she promised, as though she were partaking of a sacrament.

IX

VERY early on the morning of the day set for the argument of the garment-workers' case in the Court of Appeals, John's motor stopped at Margaret's door. She had been waiting on the sidewalk, and with a tremulous word of greeting, she entered the car and seated herself beside him. It had been his whim, on this last morning, to drive through the city, whose aspect he had changed so materially, and to cast a swift glance of farewell upon the scenes of his battles. He wanted Margaret to be with him. He had seen Arthur Chase the day before, and talked with him casually and pleasantly, letting slip no hint of the catastrophe to which he looked forward. He had borrowed the key of the office, which was once his own, but was now Cushing's, and last night, with Margaret beside him, he had looked long and thoughtfully out into the night, upon the city he had spent his life in conquering, and holding as his prize. This morning, he had placed in the hands of Thomas a minute series of instructions, and with no hesitation, therefore, the machine swung westward till it reached and passed the confines of the business district, and came to a halt in front of the little old boarding house on Hollins Street, where John and Margaret had first met. It seemed tiny and dingy to them now. They

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wondered silently what manner of youths and maidens lived within its walls and how life was scheming to deal with each of them. As they sat watching, the door opened, and a young, vigorous man swung himself down the steps and out into the early morning. It was his turn now. The faithless city, like the heartless coquette she was, might lure him too, into spending his days in winning her and striving to keep her constant, only, when his strength should wane, to fling herself with a radiant smile into the arms of a new master.

Thence they drove past the Twelfth National Bank—not the structure which had stood on the same spot that day when John, on the brink of ruin, had saved himself by seizing the hand of Hilda,—but a tall and imposing building, which John Howard himself had caused to arise there after the Great Fire. And next they reached the city offices of the Monumental Cotton Duck Company,—and soon after the old rooms on Lexington Street, where “Howard & Chase” had worked and planned during the days before John had realized his dazzling ambitions. They then passed the great gray pile of the Atlantic Trust & Deposit Company, once Cameron’s, then John’s, now alas, Flaxman’s. Soon they were on their way to Mt. Vernon Place, where John could pause and bring back to his memory the scent of the spring night, when he had stolen Hilda’s love; and so they passed

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from place to place, each with its intimate thread of reminiscence, binding his heart to the spot, each helping to make up the great fabric of his passion for the city—the city he had sworn to dominate, be the cost what it might. “A sentimental journey,” he had called it, half-mocking the emotions he had made no effort to curb.

At the end of its wide *détour*, the car turned east again on Baltimore Street, to the hall where the pent-up sentimentalism of John’s nature, despised by him during all his working years, had suddenly burst its bonds and taken control of him. Then they passed once more Margaret’s home on Albemarle Street, and a few minutes later were beyond the limits of the city—John’s city—crossing the long bridge over the river, on their way toward Annapolis.

He looked back at the familiar outlines in pensive silence. There was no quarter on which his eye rested which did not bear some mark of his hand and brain. Yet in its streets, men and women were doing the same things, saying the same words, quailing before the same terrors, as before his coming. He had wrought some change in everything, except in the hearts of men.

In all this time barely a word had been spoken. Each was busy with silent thoughts, but as the car rushed swiftly through the placid country side, John’s memories returned from the images of by-gone years.

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to those of the present and to Margaret. He caught her hand tightly in his own and said gently and thankfully:

“ I’ve been wonderfully happy, Margaret! Haven’t you? ”

She nodded assent, afraid to trust herself to speak.

Nor were they merely cheating themselves into this belief, each trying, in hidden sorrow, to soothe the other’s pain. Under the shadow of the suspended sword, they had found a marvellous, though all too brief joy—not the tempestuous happiness of youthful passion, nor the unrestrained gaiety of mere pleasure seeking, but the calm serenity of two natures, each of which sought peace and simple companionship, after years of restlessness and reticence.

For John, especially, it was an oasis in the desert of a bleak and lonely life. For the first time in his recollections, his days had been free from struggling. He had plotted no scheme for personal advancement, the success of which would be a mere prelude to another series of complexities. Living had grown to be a matter of clean-cut, definite outlines, stretching out to a purposeful conclusion. Its fever had passed away. There was the lock-out to be thought of and the appeal, it was true, but the course in each of these matters was already mapped out; most of the details could be trusted to the strong hands of his lieutenants; he had little to do but to await a successful outcome,

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and of this he never entertained a single doubt. He could give himself up completely, and without reserve, to the calm happiness of knowing Margaret was with him; of long talks with her, devoted to thoughts of themselves and their lives, and where fate had dealt harshly with them, and above all, to the never-ending and never-solved discussion of the purpose of all the storm and stress they had endured, and through which all the children of men, born like themselves of women, must also pass.

John had his duties in connection with the labor war and the appeal, and Margaret would not abandon her patients, but their hours of separation only gave an added tang to the moment when they could meet again, and read and talk and think together. Each day was made into some sort of holiday. They would visit together the quaint places of the city, known perfectly well to each, but which both enjoyed seeing anew through the other's eyes. They made long expeditions in the automobile through the snow-clad hills and mountains of Western Maryland. They devised and executed a score of plans for delightful celebrations of imaginary anniversaries of pretended happenings in the joint life they had never realized.

But what seemed best of all to John was the freedom from constraint, the intimate comradeship which left him free, after all these years of cold reticence, to open his mind and heart freely to this dear com-

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panion, in perfect confidence of her sympathy, even when she could not accept his views.

To him it all made up part of a beautiful idyl—a solemn and melodious epilogue to his troubled life.

Margaret, true to her promise, did not spoil it with weak repinings over the rapidly-approaching conclusion. If, in the solitude of the nights, her heart was torn with grief because of the parting which could not be long delayed, the traces of her vigils were hidden in the hours they spent together.

At first, he had been somewhat concerned lest their constant association might cause the breath of slander to do Margaret some injury. For himself, he was beyond caring what people thought of him. But she thrust the idea from her with a proud disdain. Her own people, among whom she lived and worked, would believe no evil of her, and as for the others, it was not worth losing one minute of their precious weeks to avoid their silly gossip.

Nevertheless, one thing did cause her serious anxiety. That was the thought of Hilda. It seemed to her, as she tried to put herself in the place of John's wife, harsh and cold of him to neglect completely any provision for a final talk with her—an opportunity to explain, each to the other, how their paths had gone asunder, and to exchange at the last, comprehension and forgiveness. Again and again, she had begged John to send for Hilda, who had left Palm Beach and

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was now at Asheville. He was not to be moved. He sent her dainty gifts from time to time, telephoned to her almost daily, and in these conversations twisted to his own purpose such rumors of his indisposition as drifted to her ears. She had leaped to a plausible conclusion, as many a keen business man had also done, regarding her husband's participation in the labor dispute. He was weaving the skeins of a scheme for gaining control of the entire garment-making industry. He fostered her delusion unblushingly, and urged her constantly to make the most of her vacation, since he was head over ears in his own pressing affairs. Margaret found it difficult to understand this side of the man. He had no conventional ideas of a death-bed repentance. Hilda would be in his way if she returned to Baltimore. He didn't mean to have his happiness marred. She would have plenty of years to remold her life in any manner she saw fit. His days were limited. He realized he had done her a serious wrong. He was apparently regretful, precisely to the same extent as he was for the other men or women who had been caught in the cogs of his machines, but seemingly no more so. Her life had missed much of breadth and fulness, but she had suffered, on the whole, less than many another worthy person, such, for example, as Margaret, or John himself; and much of her pain had been her own fault. She had wilfully refused to make the best of the situation, though

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he had tried to help her to do it. She had hurt him too. Not, he explained to Margaret, that he bore malice any longer, but the facts must not be ignored. If she had given him the son he had craved, they would have found a common interest. When disease had laid its grip upon him, he would then have been content to sit idly at his hearth-side, teaching his boy the lessons he had learned of life. He would not have chafed at years of invalidism, or gone off hunting for enthusiasms other than the love of his own child. He did not say these things in bitterness. It was as though he were discussing some other man's discordant marriage. But he remained obdurate.

Margaret was unsatisfied, all the more because she realized how each of her hours was made richer and happier by the absence of John's wife. After many serious discussions, a compromise was evolved. He would write to Hilda a letter which should explain everything, and rob his neglect of her of part, at least, of its sting. This letter should be given her after his death. He yielded to this plan, more to please Margaret than because of any appeal it made to him, but after he set himself to the task, he discovered a certain pleasure in brushing away the dainty cobwebs of artificiality between Hilda and himself. It was a truthful letter, and a curious one, which he laid sealed in Margaret's hands. He would have shown its contents to her, but she felt there would be a serious indelicacy in

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her intrusion into this final intimacy of husband and wife. And this was the letter which Margaret would not read :

Dear Hilda :

When this letter reaches you, it may cause you to wonder why I did not leave unbroken the silence into which I shall then have entered.

You will know, before you open it, how I died. They will tell you I anticipated my end—even, in a manner, sought it. You will know of my failure to send for you—my deliberate deception of you, to put it more frankly, during the months when I knew perfectly well what was before me. You will have heard of the strange cause I fought for. Your friends and mine will try to hide their sneers when they speak of it, and you will have every human excuse for giving credence to sinister rumors about my friendship with the woman from whom I have drawn happiness and inspiration in these last days.

Perhaps it would have been wiser for me to trust to such charity as you could summon, and pass without wordy explanations out into the dark. I have, however, been led to believe you might infer from my silence a failure to think of you at all. It might seem to you as though I had utterly put out of my mind the many memories of the fifteen years of our marriage. I have, in fact, thought of you long and searchingly, and I have written to you, so that you may know the things at the bottom of my mind. Some of what I write may cause you distress. This I regret more sincerely than you can believe ; at this day I would wish to cause no more suffering to anyone, and certainly not to you, who have lived in patience beside me all these years. But I am through with pretence, and I write on the theory that it will bring you more comfort (or at least less pain), to know exactly why, since you went South, I did the things you think heartless, than you would feel if you imagined I never cared about your sensibilities at all.

Let us begin then with the matter which will trouble you most—my companionship with Margaret Gilmor. You've allowed yourself to become a conventional woman (it's partly my fault,

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I know, but the result is what we are dealing with), and because of your conventionality, you will take some comfort in my solemn assurance that there is not the slightest truth in the particular inference, always drawn among our acquaintances when a man and a woman find pleasure in being together.

I tell you this, as I say, because I know this definite knowledge will put an entirely different aspect upon your view of my conduct. It wouldn't if I were you, I'm frank to admit. The state of mind and feeling lying behind an actual physical happening is the important part to me, and so far as my thoughts and emotions were concerned, if there be any force in the dogma which teaches that, after marriage, a man, forsaking all other women, should cleave only unto his wife, then I have done you an injury. And even otherwise, had I been anything but a miserable, broken reed of a man, studiously avoiding any and every form of excitement, perhaps—but had I not been so, Margaret Gilmor and I would have had no meetings and your rights in me would have been safe. I should have been rushing along, planning mergers and stock controls and I should have found only contemptuous disdain for a fanatic who pottered around nursing helpless incompetents. Don't think I am brutal because of the way I put these things. If I didn't tell you the whole truth, you couldn't be sure of the truth of anything I am writing you.

I knew Margaret before I knew you—before I came to the Bar, in fact. I was practically engaged to marry her. I never mentioned her to you before or since our marriage, and there again you have reason to feel I have done you a wrong. I make no denial of it. It was part of the larger injury I did you when I married you. But it seemed a trifling part. I cut adrift from her, because I saw she would have hampered me in my plans for commercial and professional success. There is no doubt she would have done so, but we had been very fond of each other, and we were only boy and girl. You see I hurt her there. Both the women who have had most effect on my life have had little joy and much unhappiness from knowing me. I don't say this self-accusingly. I have taken my share of the pain, and I could not help being made in my own peculiar mould. Most people—men as well as women—who have dealt with me, have been forced to give much and gain little. I had to use them in my work.

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I never saw Margaret again, or heard from her, till I knew I was going to die. That's why there seemed no use in mentioning her to you.

As for my marriage, it would be easy to write in a strain of maudlin self-reproach, but it wouldn't give you a faithful picture of my thoughts. I didn't love you. You would have told me this again and again, if you hadn't thought it ill-bred for husband and wife to indulge in accusation and recrimination. Well, that is truth, but it's only half truth. I married you because I needed your father's name to save me from the absolute ruin of all my plans. It was that, or the complete wreck of my life work. Remember, it wasn't his money I wanted, but only to be known for a brief space as his son-in-law. That, from your point of view, was unspeakably ugly and cruel. I knew it, and I regretted it at the time, but, on the other hand, if ever a man meant to deal gently and fairly with a wife, that man was I; and I never completely gave up trying, till the day I settled you comfortably in your compartment, on your way to Palm Beach. But when you had made sure I lacked the romantic attachment you desired, you cast everything else away. I meant to make you a full partner in my plans and work. You had the mind for it in those days, but you wilfully refused to help it grow. You would give me nothing but patience, good manners and unfailing civility. Your conduct about children was an index to your whole attitude. Because of one flaw in me, you balked my dearest scheme and with it your own happiness. I don't write these things in a spirit of anger or bitterness. You're no more to be blamed because you couldn't be made over to fit my views, than I am for my own character. And it was I who drew you into relationship with me. I simply want you to understand how things stood between us when I suddenly was told to lay down all my labor and get ready to die.

Conventionally, it was my duty to send for you or to go to you. Actually, it would have made us both wretched. You would have dutifully arranged for all my physical needs, my diet, my rest, my motor drives and such light exercise as the doctor might approve. You would have chatted with me wittily,—let no day pass without some notable bit of clever speech. You would have insisted I was not really making you uncomfortable, and at

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definite hours you would have read to me the stock market reports, or some little new book of Maeterlinck's, as my fancy might dictate. And you would have done these things in all gentle sweetness. You must not suppose I have not noticed how hard you have tried to do your duty to me, and how well you did it. But you do feel it as a duty. Perhaps, that makes your conduct all the more commendable. I don't know much about moral values. I can only say what I feel. What I wanted was to talk about why men slave like I have done, and what was the use of all the things we spend ourselves in doing. Most of all, I wanted to talk about death itself, and how it was to be fitted into one's philosophy of life. You would have raised your eyebrows, but you would have humored me. I didn't want to be humored. I wanted to find someone who would look the grim facts of existence clearly in the eyes. Before I chanced across Margaret, I had decided I had no right to ask these things of you. That was a concession to you, not a slur. If I had been a husband in the full sense of the word, I would have felt it my right to make you drink this potion with me. I hadn't been. Therefore, it would only have sickened you, without giving me any added comfort.

After I'd heard my death sentence, I met Margaret again, not by design, but casually, after twenty-one years of separation, and I found her willing to talk out with me the vital things of which I wanted to speak, and think. I chose to make full use of the help she held out to me, and I have no apologies to make for doing it.

And my conduct about the lock-out, with its waste of money and its fool-hardy risk at the end to my impaired health? That I'm sure I could never make you understand, so I might as well spare the effort. It's subtle. I hardly understand it myself. It will be easy for you to believe I did it because I was infatuated by a woman, and she used me for her own purposes. You would be wrong in this simple solution. She begged me not to do it. I can only put the puzzle into terms which you'd understand, by saying I acted on the same impulse which scandalized you when your second cousin felt a call to abandon his respectable pulpit and join the outcast sect, in which he is now so radiantly happy, and socially neglected. Or perhaps I deceived myself, and it is nothing better than my old desire to dominate, even from

the grave, a situation which would baffle other men. Anyhow, it was an odd thing to happen to me. But it met my need; at this moment it still gives me the same thrill I felt when, as a boy, I mapped out my plans for some day holding the destiny of the city in my own hands. If it can give me such sensations in the shadow of death, it serves its purpose, whether it be wise and good, or silly and wicked. A man about to die is given large indulgence, even though he may have committed murder. The life I am giving up is not linked with yours in such communion that I felt it wrong to lay it down without your consent. I am of no use to you. Perhaps, I'm even a heavy burden. You will find my absence something of a sorrow, but then my presence was that too.

So, like two travellers who have jogged along together—not always as jovially as they might have wished—but not too ill-naturedly either, let us part good friends. You had great qualities, Hilda; you would have been a wonderful woman, perhaps, if you'd fallen into other company than mine. I'm sorry about that. Above all things, I shrink from waste. But I had to have you. It was a choice between waste of you or of me.

Remember, too, you might have chanced on a worse husband than I, even though he gave you the love which seemed to you all important. He might have done a deadlier thing than merely killing, as I did, your capacity for growth; he might have dragged you down to a lower level. You will freely do me the justice to admit I never did that.

You are still young and clever and distinguished-looking. You will be fabulously rich now. There are days of boundless opportunity before you. It piques my curiosity to think I may never know how you will deal with them. I could deluge you with advice, but I have no right to be sure I know better than you what to do with life, and even if I did, no one can follow another man's instructions, except mechanically.

Therefore, you'll find no restrictions upon you in my Will. Except for a few personal legacies, and the provision for the garment workers, everything is yours, to do with as you please. You can endow a hospital, or an orphan asylum, or a university, if you find pleasure in so doing, and there will be no one to say you nay; you can even give some of the money to your

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Church—though if there is such a thing as immortality, I shall make wry faces when I see you do it. Still, I don't urge you not to. Please yourself. The money is the only thing I was ever able to give you, so I am glad there is such a lot of it—enough, perhaps, to kindle your imagination anew. It never was much use to me. I wanted to give some small part of it to Margaret Gilmor, but she would not have it.

I think the two of you might grow really fond of each other, if you, Hilda, would be big enough to make the effort to know her. It would be rather unconventional, to be sure, but it would be worth while. You're both unusual women, for all your enormous differences in temperament, and you've this great memory in common:

You have suffered, each of you, because you loved me.

Nor need you, remembering how you did love me once, feel a pang of jealousy, because at the end I found happiness with her. I know and she knows that had I married her in my boyhood, as we had planned, I should have become estranged from her more sharply than I have from you. She would have looked on my work with actual antagonism, and she would have been promptly sacrificed to it. Perhaps, then, in my last weeks, I should have chanced across you, with your illusions still undimmed by fifteen years of dull, gray marriage, and it would have been your strength from which I drew. Who knows?

So that's my story, Hilda! I haven't told it, I suppose, as winningly as it might be written, but I've done my best to give you the naked truth. One more thing I ought to add, lest you may think I never realized the full height of your spirit. If I had sent for you, or gone to you, your pity for me, suddenly stricken in the midst of my success, might have welded us together again, were it not for my uncontrollable hatred of being pitied. You would have made advances to me in a shy, reserved way, in which I could not have helped seeing a certain nobility. And I, in blind fury at anyone's compassion, even yours, would have thrust you away, hurting you again, and hating myself for doing it. You see, I'm incorrigible.

And now, farewell! May all good fortune go with you! If my impersonal philosophy is all wrong and your rigid religion turns out to be true, there is not a shadow of doubt in my mind

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of your God's indulgent pardon for all the harm I have done. He will not deal harshly with me for obeying literally the impulse He, himself, planted in my nature. Perhaps, after all, I was doing His work; and in His own way, He causes pain enough in carrying out those plans of His we can never understand.

I don't mean to seem blasphemous. What I was trying to say is this: You, with all your finite shortcomings, can surely find it possible to be no less tolerant than the God you believe in. Be tolerant, then, when you remember me!

Think, if you can, of the beauty of the love you bore me in those early days, Hilda, and forget all the later sadness and misunderstanding wrapped about the memory of

Your husband,

JOHN.

And now, having done with Hilda and all other things, save alone his high purpose and his Margaret, John leaned back in the car and the silence was for a long time unbroken, as they speeded along toward the goal. Margaret was secretly indulging a hope of his living through the day's ordeal unscathed, or only slightly injured. John, for his part, neither expected nor desired such an issue.

As they approached the bridge across the Severn and the spire of the old State House and the roof of the Court of Appeals building became visible against the sky, Margaret's stoicism, for the first time, suddenly deserted her. She clutched hysterically at John, and sobbed convulsively.

"Don't go. Let's turn back! Telephone you're sick—get a postponement! Let Russell argue it! I can't bear it—I can't!"

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John put his arms about her and held her close in his embrace.

"Don't ask it of me, Margaret," he urged, almost in entreaty. "My only fear is that the end may not come. Don't you see this is the close of our wonderful happiness, whether I live or die? We filled these weeks full to the brim, because we knew it was for so short a time. If we tried to go back to the dull routine of existence, something clandestine would creep into our lives. It would be sordid. All the element of beautiful adventure would be lost. We've had the best. If I lived a century, there could be nothing more; and at the end, I have to die some time. There will never be a day when I can look into the face of death again so serenely, and so free from doubt or despair."

She hushed her sobs and dried her tears. She had promised she would do nothing to turn his strength into weakness. She would try to keep her word. Besides, she could not change his resolution. It should be her endeavor not to mar the exaltation of his mood.

The car, passing rapidly by the quaint old Colonial dwellings, with their stately doorways, drew up sharply before the flat, red-brick building, which housed the State's highest court. It looked flagrantly out of place in the ancient village, a bit of the modern city's passion for trim new efficiency, set down bodily in the heart of this venerable pre-Revolutionary town.

John recalled vividly, as he entered the great lobby,

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with its huge, white stairway on either side, the day of the structure's dedication—the impressive address made by the man who was then Chief Justice, and who had long since passed from the earth, living only in the dry pages of the Court's decisions. The sunlight, on that morning, just as to-day, had made great pools of crimson and purple on the marble floor, as it shone through the Great Seal of Maryland, emblazoned on the stained glass window. His whimsical memory reminded him, too, of the sprig of lily-of-the-valley Hilda had placed in his coat lapel, as he went off to the ceremony, “so that no one would know he was married,” she had said.

The rapid pace of the motor-car had brought them to the Court some minutes before the hour of its sitting. It was as John had intended. He had desired Margaret not to remain in the court-room during the trial. The ordeal would be too much for her. Nor was there need of it. Russell would be there, and there would also be a young physician, Deeming's assistant, to render any aid which might be possible.

He drew her then into the shelter of a doorway, opening into a clerk's office, at the head of the staircase, and just across from the entrance leading into the room where he had won many a legal combat, and meant now to win the last and the best.

Her icy hand trembled in his grasp. The time had come for a farewell.

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"Margaret, my Margaret," he said in his low, intense tones. "The day I entered a court to try my first case, I was thinking of you, planning how, when the verdict was won, I would come to you with roses and carry you off to be loved and cared for always; and this morning, when I'm going into that room to make my last argument, once more all my thoughts are of you and my love for you. At the first and the last, when I was boyish and unspoilt, and now, when I have thrown away all except what seems true and vital, my mind and my heart have been brimming over with you. You will always remember that, Margaret?"

"I shall always remember," she repeated, almost in a whisper.

"When I try to think back over my life," he mused aloud, "I can't understand why things happened as they did. Most of it seems futile to me. How I strove to make the wheels go faster and faster! It took a lifetime! It kept me from you! No one seems any happier because of the great speed we gained. Yet I should have to do it all over again if I were twenty."

She murmured an incoherent word, to signify that she too found it all a riddle, and he continued still to think aloud:

"I don't understand why I had to have power. It wasn't because I used it to give me pleasure. I don't understand why, now at the end, I am intoxicated with the idea of using my death in the service of men

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I know are not my equals in any way. I only know these things are. But this too, I know: If I hadn't used my life to do the things you hate, I would not, at its end, be able to do this deed you think splendid. I would not have gained the sagacity to manage the men, or money to fill the treasury, or skill to win this case. Even while I was doing the things you despise, I was using and developing the part of me you love! Can you make anything of it?"

"Nobody can," she replied. "It's beyond all men. That's why some of us believe in God."

He looked at her yearningly.

"Such intense force in me," he murmured. "So much of it wasted! Such power in our love—yours and mine—with our dreams and hopes and sufferings—spread over all these years—so to be ended with our own short lives! Isn't it possible," he asked, almost as though he were pleading for a boon she could grant him, "isn't it possible that somehow—some way—this great force, this beautiful affection, can live again, be put to use—perfected—saved from utter annihilation?"

"I believe it," Margaret answered fervently. "Say you believe it too!"

While they were speaking, there came from the court-room the confusion of footsteps and voices. Through the open door the black-gowned judges could be seen filing toward their places on the bench. A bailiff came to the door and beckoned to John.

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But Margaret clung to him, repeating her demand. "Say you believe it!"

Regardless of who might see, he kissed her full on the lips, and turning to the door, smiled back on her—not the worn, world-wise smile of the middle-aged financier, but the clear, enthusiastic smile of the lost boy come into his own again on this day of days.

"It is my hope, Margaret," he affirmed. "And now I'm going to make certain."

As he passed into the court-room, there flowed into the corridor the droning voice of the clerk, repeating his age-long formula:

"Oyez, oyez, oyez! All persons having business with the Court of Appeals of Maryland will draw near and give their attention. The Honorable Court is now in session."

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